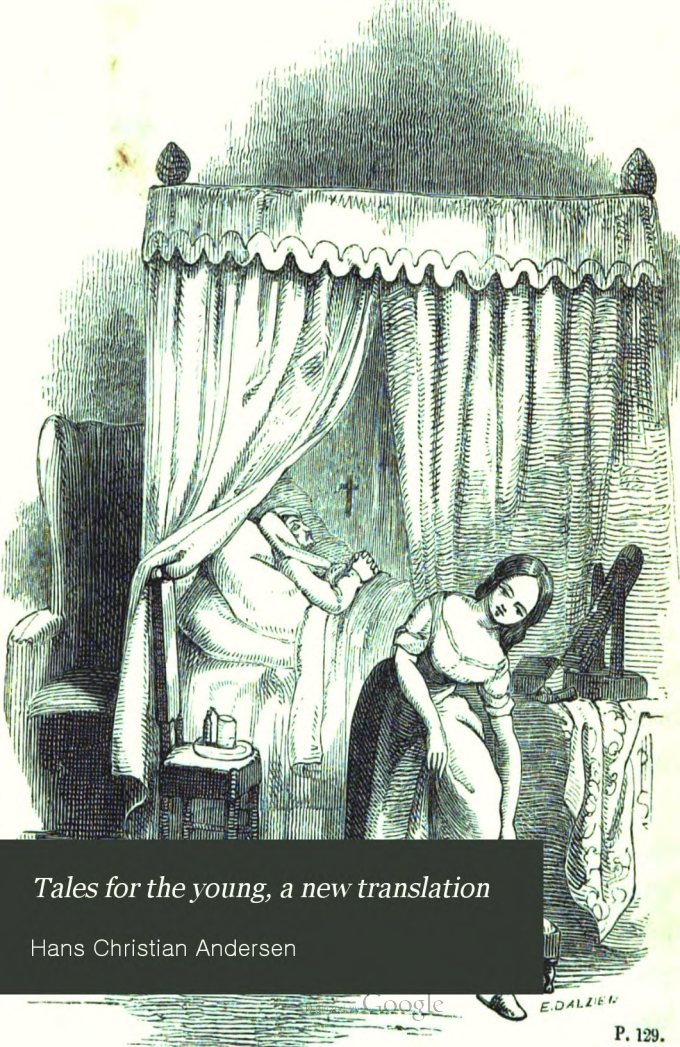
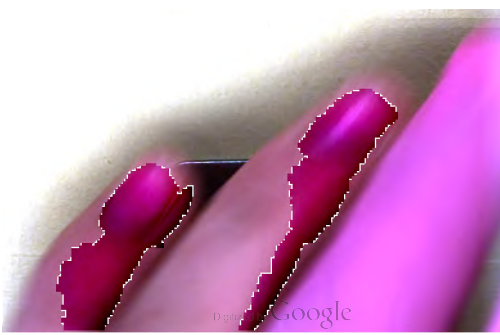


Tales for the young, a new translation

Hans Christian Andersen



Tales For the Young.

etc. etc.

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THE WILD SWANS. P. 30.

Tales
For the Young.

By

Hans Christian Andersen.

A New Translation.

London: James Burns.
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE imaginative writings of HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN are now so well known and appreciated in England, that no apology is necessary for including a selection of them in a series of books intended to cultivate the imagination and affections of the young. It is only needful to remark, that in making up the following little volume, the choice of the Editor has fallen upon those pieces which seemed most suited for *juvenile* reading; in which respect the plan of the work will be found to differ from any other selection that has hitherto appeared.

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Tales for the Young.

THE BUCKWHEAT.

OFTEN, in passing by a field of buckwheat after a thunder-storm, we see it all look quite black and drooping; we might almost think a flame of fire had swept over it; and it is then that the farmer is used to say, "Ah, the lightning has done all that to it!"

"But why has the lightning done all this?" will be asked, perhaps, by some solitary traveller, who seeks a natural cause, or at least a simple reason, for all that Nature does. I will now tell

you what the house-sparrow told me about it. The house-sparrow had it from an old willow-tree that once stood, and indeed is now standing, close by just such a field of buck-wheat. It is a large grave willow-tree, gnarled and rich in years, that seems to have burst in the middle; and from whose gaping clefts grow the grass and the bramble, and seem quite at home there. Its trunk bends over very much, as if it wanted a prop; and its branches hang down to the ground, like long green hair.

On all the fields round about grew beautiful grain, — rye, and barley, and oats; — yes, the pretty oats, which, when they are quite ripe, look just like a flight of little canary-birds on a bough. The growth of the corn had been blessed; and the heavier it was, the more humbly the good plant bowed its lowly head.

But there was a field of buckwheat too, and this field stretched itself out on one side till it reached the old willow-tree. The buckwheat did not bow its head at all, like the other sorts of corn, but towered up in the air as proudly and stiffly as it could.

"I am as rich as the greatest of them," it said, "and much prettier too; my flowers are as beautiful as the rosy apple-blossom, and a delightful treat it is to look at me and my com-

panions. Do you know of any thing more beautiful, more noble; or, in short, any thing that can vie with us, you old dreamy willow-tree?"

And the mouldering stem nodded its mossy head, as if to say, "Oh, yes, indeed! that I do." But the buckwheat tossed up its head in pure disdain, and said, "The foolish tree! He is so old that grass and weeds are creeping out of his body."

In the mean while a very heavy storm came on. All the flowers of the field folded their leaves together, or modestly bowed their tender little heads to the ground, whilst the wind whistled over them. The buckwheat was the only one that stood saucily erect in its pride.

"Bend down as we do," whispered the other kind flowers.

"What need have I to do that?" said the buckwheat, who would not easily be taught.

"Bend down as we do!" cried the corn; "the angel of the storm is coming; he has wings that reach from the highest cloud to the bottom of the lowliest vale, and he will dash you down before you can ask him to have pity on you."

"Once for all, I will not make so little of myself," answered the buckwheat.

"Shut up your flowers, and draw in your leaves," said the cautious old willow-tree. "Look

not up at the lightning when the cloud opens: even men dare not do so, for when it lightens they can see quite through into heaven; though the light strikes them blind. What, then, would not befall us, the herbs of the field, if we, in our littleness, dared to do so?"

"In our littleness!" echoed the buckwheat mockingly. "No, indeed! I will look straight through into heaven."

And he did so, in his guilty pride. It lightened so brightly that the whole world seemed to be in flames.

As soon as the storm had raged its last, the flowers and the corn were seen standing in the still pure air, refreshed with the rain, and happy as the spring. But the buckwheat — the poor buckwheat! — had been burnt as black as a coal in the lightning. It was nothing more now than a dead useless weed of the field.

And the old willow-tree waved his branches in the wind, and large drops of water fell from the green leaves, as if the tree were weeping; and the sparrows said, "Why do you weep? It is so beautiful here. Look how the sun is shining, and the clouds sailing along. Do not you breathe the sweet scent of the flowers and the bushes? Why do you weep, then, you old willow-tree?"

And the willow-tree told of the pride and the

haughtiness of the buckwheat, and of the punishment which, sooner or later, always follows upon crime. I, who now tell this story over again, had it from the chattering sparrows. They twittered it to me one evening when I asked them for some pretty tale.

THE

WILD SWANS.

FAR, very far from here, in those wonderful parts of the world that the swallows go to in the winter-time, when every thing is covered with ice and snow, there lived a king, who had eleven sons, and one only daughter, named Elfrida. The eleven brothers, all princes of high blood, went regularly to school, with stars on their breasts, and sabres at their sides: they wrote with diamond pens on tables of gold, and learned all they had to learn thoroughly, and knew it by heart. It was easy to see that they were of princely race. Little Elfrida, in the mean while, sat upon a little stool, made all of looking-glass, turning over the leaves of a

beautiful picture-book, so beautiful that it cost the price of half the kingdom.

Oh, the children had a happy life of it, although their dear mother was no longer living! But things were not always to last thus.

Their father, the king of the whole land, married a wicked queen, who had no liking at all for the poor children. On the very day of the wedding, she made them feel this plainly enough. There were great rejoicings and festivities all over the palace, and the children were playing at "visiting;" but instead of getting as many sweet cakes and roasted apples as they could eat, which they usually did, she only gave them sand in a tea-cup, telling them that they could just play and fancy there was really something nice in it.

The week after this, the artful step-mother sent little Elfrida away to some country people; and before long, she had said so much to the weak-minded king against the eleven princes, that he ceased to care at all about them.

"Fly abroad into the wide world, and provide for yourselves," said the wicked queen; "fly away in the shape of large birds that have no voices!" However, she could not make things quite so bad as she wished to do; for the princes were changed to eleven stately wild swans. With a strange scream they flew out of the

windows of the palace, over the wood and the park.

It was quite early next morning when they came to the place where their sister Elfrida was lying asleep in the lowly peasant's hut. They hovered again and again round the roof, and kept turning their long necks to this side and that, as if in search of something, and flapping their wings; but nobody either heard or saw them. Again they had to be away, high up among the clouds, far off into the large boundless world; but the first thing they did was to look for a dark thick forest, that stretched itself miles and miles down to the very sea. In the mean while poor Elfrida stood in the peasant's cot, and played with a green leaf, for she had not any other sort of toy. She made a hole in the leaf with a pin, and peered through it at the sun. Then she fancied she could see the bright eyes of her brothers; and every time the warm sunbeams shone upon her cheek, she thought of their delicious kisses.

One day passed away like another. When the wind shook the thick rose-bushes outside the house, it whispered to the roses, "What could be more beautiful than you?" But the roses shook their heads, and said, "Oh, yes, Elfrida is more lovely!" And when, on a Sunday, the old housewife sat reading her hymn-book before the

cottage-door, the wind would turn the leaves, and whisper to the book, "What is so good and innocent as you?" "Oh, Elfrida is!" the hymn-book would say. And the roses and hymn-book both spoke the truth.

Now, when Elfrida was fifteen years of age, it was agreed that she should go home. But as soon as the cruel queen saw how pretty she had grown, she was inflamed with rage and envy, and did more spiteful things than ever to her beautiful little step-daughter. Gladly would she have changed her into a wild swan, like her brothers, but she did not dare to do so directly, because the king had often said he wished to see his little daughter again.

At early dawn, one morning, the queen went to the bath. It was built of marble, and finely adorned with soft easy cushions and costly carpets. There she took three toads in her hand, and kissing them, said to the first, "Seat yourself upon Elfrida's head when she comes to the bath, that she may become stupid and sleepy as you are." "Plant yourself upon her brow," said she to the second, "that she may become as ugly as you are, and that her father may not know her." "Fix yourself in her breast," whispered she to the third; "and give her an evil heart, that she may grow wicked, and prey upon

herself." So saying, she threw the toads into the pure clear water, which immediately changed to a nasty green; then she hastily called Elfrida to her, helped her to undress with a cruel joy, and made her go down into the bath.

As soon as the artless little princess dipped herself in the water, the first toad seated itself on her hair, the second on her brow, and the third upon her bosom. But she did not seem to know that they were there; and as she arose, three little red poppies might be seen floating in the crystal mirror. Had not they been poisonous reptiles, and besides this, been kissed by the witch, they would have been changed to bright red roses; as it was, however, they turned to flowers, because they had rested on Elfrida's head and heart. The pretty princess was far too good and too innocent for the charm to have any effect upon her.

When the wicked queen saw this, she rubbed Elfrida all over with walnut-juice, till her lily-white skin became of a dirty brown, daubed her sweet face with a nasty ointment, and ruffled her beautiful soft curls till they became all knotted and tangled. It was altogether impossible to know the charming Elfrida under this ugly and frightful disguise.

When her father saw her, he declared without more ado that she was not his daughter. Nor

would any one else acknowledge that they knew her. The watch-dog only and the swallows welcomed the unhappy princess as an old and dear acquaintance; but they were poor dumb animals, and had nothing to say.

Then poor Elfrida began to weep, and to think of her eleven brothers who were gone. In heartfelt sorrow she stole out of the castle-gate, and wandered the whole day long over field and moor, into the large dark forest. She had not the most distant idea where she wanted to go; but she felt so down-hearted, and longed so very much for her brothers: surely, thought she, they are now wandering like myself, homeless and forsaken, through the wide world; I will go in search of them until I find them.

Elfrida had been but a short time in the wood, when night suddenly closed upon her. She had quite lost her way. Trembling with fear, she lay down on the softest moss she could find, said her evening prayer, and leaned her weary head against the trunk of a tree, that seemed to have been riven by the lightning. A soft melancholy stillness reigned around her; the air was mild and balmy; and in the grass and on the moss thousands of little glowworms encircled her, and sent up their little green sparkles of fire. When she gently put out her hand, and touched one of the green

boughs that sheltered her, the flaming little insects fell down upon her like a shower of bright shooting stars.

All night long she lay dreaming of her brothers: she thought they were all playing together again as merrily as before, writing on their golden tablets with diamond pens, and turning over the leaves of that precious picture-book which had once cost half the kingdom. But now that they had grown to be tall and strong, they did not scribble their 0's and strokes any more; but they described, in words which every one could understand, the bold deeds they had done, and every thing else that they had seen or heard of. Their tablets were now looked upon from a new and higher point of view. And in the picture-book, too, all was alive and stirring. The birds sang, the antelopes bounded about, and the men and women stepped forth from the pages in living form, talking kindly and pleasantly with Elfrida and her brothers. But when she turned to the next leaf, they would all hurry back to their proper places again, that the regular order of the pictures might not be broken; for order it is that rules the world.

By the time she awoke from her refreshing sleep, the sun was high in the heavens. To be sure she could not see it, because of the large

trees that spread their close and tangled branches above her; but through these she could see a sort of glistering and twinkling, like that of a wavy piece of golden gauze. The nice sweet smell of the green trees and grass filled all the air, and the birds looked so tame that she thought they would soon perch upon her shoulder. She heard the babbling of the water also, as it came from a number of little trickling rills that met all together in a beautiful lake, the bottom of which was of the finest and smoothest sand. It is true there was a tangled barrier of creeping shrubs and flowers between it and her; but in one place the deer had made a large gap in it, and through this Elfrida went to the water, which was so very clear, that, if the wind had not just then put the boughs and bushes in motion, she would to a certainty have thought that they were cleverly painted on the bottom; for every little leaf was plainly reflected,—not only every one that the golden sun shone through, but every one, too, that was hidden in shade.

But oh, how she started back at the hideous sight, when she beheld her own face in the watery mirror! Oh, to see herself so brown and ugly! But when she wetted her little hand, and rubbed her eyes and forehead, the white lily skin shone forth as brightly as ever through the nasty

frightful disguise. Elfrida was so overjoyed at this, that she did not hesitate a moment to pull off all her clothes, and fearlessly to plunge into the fresh and gladdening pool. The whole world through, I think, no king ever had a more beautiful child than she was.

As soon as she had dressed herself again, had simply parted her long wavy hair, and then tastefully woven it into a braid, she went merrily to the bubbling spring, drank a refreshing draught in the hollow of her hand, and dived farther and farther into the wood, without knowing whither she was going. She thought of her brothers, and thought of the good God above her, who, she knew, would never forsake her. No, indeed. He would make the wild apples grow, in order to satisfy her hunger; and He shewed her a tree, a most beautiful tree, with its branches almost weighed down to the ground by its immense load of fruit. Here she took her dinner; and then, with heartfelt gratitude, placing props under the branches of this nice kind tree, she tripped forward again into the darkest parts of the wood. All was so still there, that she could hear her own footsteps, and the rustling, indeed, of every little leaf that she happened to brush by. Not a bird was to be seen, and not a single ray of the sun could pierce the thick covering of the leaves. The tall trees

stood so close together, that whichever way she looked, it seemed just as if there were nothing but wooden gratings all round her, placed close behind one another. There was a loneliness in the scene, such as she had never before known.

And the night grew darker and darker; not *one* little glowworm even was to be seen sparkling on the moss. Full of sadness, Elfrida lay down to sleep. Then of a sudden it seemed to her as though the branches parted above her head, and the good God looked kindly and graciously down upon her, with a countenance full of love and gentleness, while glad little angels were seen hovering around.

When she awoke next morning, she could not quite make out whether she had dreamt all this, or whether it really had been so.

But now she set out upon her wanderings again, when, as soon as she had gone a few steps, she was met by an old woman, with all sorts of strawberries, blackberries, and other nice fruits in a basket. The old woman gave her some of them; and Elfrida asked her whether she might not have seen eleven princes riding through the wood.

"No," answered the old woman; "but yesterday I saw eleven swans swimming down the

neighbouring stream, with golden crowns upon their heads." And so saying, she led Elfrida a little way farther on to a rocky slope, with a stream winding its way at the foot of it. The trees upon its banks stretched out their long leafy boughs on either side, as if they dearly wished to embrace each other; and when, by means of their usual manner of growth, they had not been able to satisfy their desire to get nearer, they had torn themselves up by the roots, and were now leaning forward with their boughs closely entangled over the smooth surface of the waters.

Elfrida bade the old woman a kind farewell, and walked along the water-side to the place where it ended at the wide sea-shore.

Here the vast, the beautiful ocean lay spread out before the young maiden in all its grandeur; but not a sail appeared in sight, not a boat was to be seen. How, then, was she to go farther on her journey? She looked at the countless little stones upon the shore, of so many different colours: the water had worn them all quite smooth and round. Glass, iron, stone,—all, indeed, that lay cast up upon the shore, had been shaped and moulded by the water, although it was much softer even than her delicate little hand. "It goes on rolling and rolling," said she, "and so

the rough things are soon worn away; so then I will be persevering too. Thanks for your teaching, ye bright restless waves! One day—for my heart tells me so—ye will bear me to my dear, dear brothers!"

Among the sea-weed that had drifted ashore lay eleven white swan feathers; these she quickly tied together in a bunch. Little bright drops of water hung like pearls upon them, as if by their simple beauty they sought to make the lovely white feathers more beautiful still. But whether they were little drops of dew, or some one's tears, it was very hard to say. Lonely indeed it was upon the shore, but Elfrida scarcely felt it; for the sea presented a constant change of scene, more, indeed, in the course of a few hours than a score of picturesque lakes shew you in a whole year. If some great black cloud came scowling onward, it was as if the sea meant to say, "You see I can look cross too sometimes." And then the wind made no little uproar, and the waves turned their white sides outermost. But when the clouds were of a beautiful crimson hue, and the winds were all asleep, the sea looked like one immense rose-leaf, constantly changing its colour, as though it were about to fade; from red to green, from green to blue, or from blue to white; and yet, be as quiet as it would, it was always

moving very softly and gently upon the shore, just as if it were breathing.

The sun was going fast down the sky, when Elfrida saw eleven wild swans with golden crowns on their heads winging their way to the land. They were almost as high as the clouds, one following closely on the other, and all forming a long wavy silver streak on the verge of the horizon. At the sight of this, Elfrida climbed up a little knoll close by, and hid herself behind a bush. The swans soon settled at her side, and kept flapping their large white wings. But at this very moment the sun's bright face sank completely under the water; the swans' feathers fell suddenly off; and lo, there stood eleven stately princes—Elfrida's brothers!

The maiden uttered a loud cry of joy; for although they were very much changed, yet she felt that it must be them; and so she hastened into their arms, calling each of them by name. Nor were they less joyful and happy when they saw their little sister before them, and found her grown so tall and so wondrously beautiful. They laughed and wept for joy at this unexpected meeting; and they had soon given one another a full account of the cruel things their step-mother had done to them.

"We eleven brothers," said the eldest of them,

"fly about in the shape of wild swans as long as the sun is in the sky; but when he sets, we recover our human form. And so at this particular time of the day, which is of such great importance to us, we must be very careful to find a firm resting-place for our feet; for if the sunset were to surprise us in the clouds, we should be sure to fall down upon the earth or into the water, in the shape of men. We do not live here; for on the other side of the sea there is just as beautiful a country as this; but it is a very long way off, far, very far across the water, and there is no island between this and that, where we could pass the night: there is nothing but a little lonely rock that rises in the midst of the rolling waves. This cliff, or rocky peak, is only just large enough to allow us to lie down side by side, as closely as we can; and if the sea is high, the water dashes over us: but still we thank God for giving us even this dangerous resting-place. There we pass the night in human form, and without some such help we should never be able to visit our beloved country, for it takes us two of the longest days in the year to make the passage. Only once in twelve months are we permitted to visit our native plains; at which season we may stay here eleven days, flying over the great wood, whence we have a view of the noble castle where we were

born, and where our father lives, and see the steeple of the church where our dear mother lies buried. Here it seems just as if the trees and flowers were our kindred; here the wild horses are running about the grassy fields, as they used to do in our happy childhood; here the charcoal-burner is singing the same old songs and inspiriting tunes which we were so fond of dancing to when we were boys. Here is our country; hither we are always longing to come; and here we have found you at last, my dear sweet sister. We have still two days to remain here, and then we must away across the sea to a beautiful country, but one, alas! that is not our native home. How can we take you with us? we have neither ship nor boat."

"Ah! how shall I be able to save you?" said their sister, sobbing.

And they passed almost the whole night in conversation; a few hours only before the dawn of day were given up to a light and peaceful sleep.

Elfrida awoke at the sound of the swans' wings, that were already whistling at some height above her. Her brothers had been changed again; they soared round and round in circles that grew larger as they rose, till at last they vanished in the distance. One of them, however, and he was

the youngest, stayed behind, and laid his head in her lap, while she stroked his soft white wings. The brother and sister stayed together the whole day. Towards evening the others returned from their long journey; and when the sun was fully sunk in the sea, they all stood before Elfrida again in their natural forms.

"To-morrow we shall fly away from here altogether," said the eldest of them; "but we cannot leave you thus! Have you courage enough to accompany us? My arm is strong enough to carry you through the wood; do not you think, therefore, we have all strength enough in our wings to fly with you over the sea?"

"Oh, yes, take me with you!" said Elfrida, imploringly.

The whole of that night the eleven brothers never closed their eyes, but were very industrious indeed; for they tried as hard as they could to make something between a net and a basket of the bark of the willow-trees, which was soft and easy to bend; and they used the rushes for those parts where they wanted it to be stiffer. When this was found to be large and strong enough, Elfrida lay down upon it; and the brothers, being changed into wild swans again with the first rays of the morning sun, took the net in their bills, and flew high up into the clouds with their

beloved sister, while she was still asleep. But, as the sunbeams darted full in her face, one of the swans always kept over her head, that his broad wings might yield her a pleasant shade.

They had left the land far behind them when Elfrida awoke. She thought she was still dreaming, so strange it appeared to her to be carried along over the sea so high up in the air. At her side lay a little bough covered with delicious berries, and a handful of savoury roots. These had been gathered for her by her youngest brother and laid in the net within her reach, and she smiled gratefully on him for this, for she guessed that he must be the one that was flying just over her head and shading her with his wings.

They took so high a flight that the first ship they saw beneath them looked no larger than a white sea-gull cradled on the bosom of the waters. A huge cloud hung behind them like some large mountain in the air, and on its wonderful surface Elfrida descried a gigantic picture of herself and her eleven brothers as they flew along. She thought she never had seen so splendid a picture; but as the sun rose higher and higher, and the mountain was left farther and farther behind them, the airy shadow also melted away, and she lost sight of it on the distant edge of the sea.

They pressed forward all day with eager impa-

tience, plying their fleet course like some whistling arrow, although, now that they had to carry their sister, their flight was somewhat slower than usual. A storm threatened, and evening began to gather. In dreadful fear Elfrida saw the sun decline, and the solitary cliff in the sea was not yet in view: it seemed to her as if the swans were making quicker strokes with their wings. Poor thing! she reckoned it all her own fault that they did not get on quickly enough. As soon as the sun is quite down (thought she), they will all change to men again, and fall in the sea and be drowned! The thought was almost death to her. Then from her inmost heart she prayed to God; but still she espied no saving rock. The black thunder-cloud drew nearer; loud gusts of wind proved that a storm was coming. The clouds were piled in one huge wavy mass; they rolled along heavily as lead, and looked like a frightful black chain, that wanted to tie up two prisoners that had just broken loose,—the wind and the water. The lightning glared, and flash followed quickly on flash. The sun was by this time on the very verge of the horizon.

Elfrida's heart throbbed with fear; when all at once the swans shot downward so very quickly that she thought she was falling; but now again they rose upon the wing. The sun was already

half sunk beneath the sea, when the terrified girl saw the little rock in the far distance below her, not looking larger than a sea-horse when he pops up his brown head from the foaming surf around him. The sun sank so fast that now it did not look larger than a star. At this moment Elfrida's foot touched the ground, and the sun vanished entirely, like the last little spark of a piece of burning paper.

The unhappy princess saw her brothers standing close round her, but there was really no more than room for them all. The sea beat violently against the rugged cliffs, and fell like a heavy shower on those good brothers and their sister as they clung to each other with tender affection. The heavens seemed on fire with the quivering lightning, and the thunder rolled in peal after peal. But the sister and brothers gave each other their hands as a token of the dearest union, and then, raising their voices with one accord, they sang some hymns in most touching harmony, which gave them new comfort and courage.

With the break of day the air was again serene and still; and at sunrise the swans flew off with Elfrida from the little solitary rock. The sea was still high; and as they once more rose to the clouds on active wing, it just looked as if the white foam on the dark-green waters were

a countless flock of swans floating over the billows.

As the sun rose higher and higher, Elfrida descried a mountainous tract of land that seemed half to float in the air, with glittering masses of ice on its steep and rocky ridges; and in the middle of this a large castle might be seen stretching itself out to the length of a mile, with gallery piled on gallery, and of a gigantic size. Beneath it palm-trees of surpassing beauty were seen rocking and waving in the gentle breeze, decked out with all sorts of fantastic and gorgeous flowers as large as the wheels of a mill. She asked if this were the land they were taking her to, but the swans shook their heads; for this was the magnificent castle of Fata Morgana, built of sunbeams and clouds, and as changeful as they are; and thither the swans dare not take any one. Elfrida's gaze was riveted on the beautiful and many-coloured pile of mist, when, of a sudden, mountain, wood, and castle fell down together in a heap, and in their place twenty stately churches appeared, each like the other, with lofty spires and pointed gables. She fancied she could catch the sound of the organ; but it was the sea, whose tuneful roar reached her ears. She was quite near the churches, when suddenly they changed to a fleet of magnificent ships, sailing along beneath her. She looked

down, and, strange to say, it was only the mist that curled upward from the sea, and swept like swelling sails over its surface. In truth, she had a scene before her that was continually changing. One image put the other to flight, until she at last caught sight of the real country whither she and her brothers meant to go. Then the wondrous blue ranges of hills, with their forests of cedar, towers and castles, arose in soft outline before her. Long before the sun went down Elfrida was seated upon the rock that stood in front of a large cavern, overgrown with creeping plants, so soft and green that the mighty hand of nature seemed to have decked out the cave with richly embroidered carpets.

"Now we shall see what you dream of here to-night," said her youngest brother, as he shewed her her bed-room.

"Oh, how I wish I could dream about the way to save you!" said she; and this was what she thought of more than any thing. She prayed earnestly to God that He would help her; and even in her dreams the good maiden continued her earnest prayer. Now all at once it appeared as if she were flying high up in the air towards the castle of Fata Morgana; and the fairy came to her herself, so brilliant and so beautiful, and yet she was just like the old woman who had given her

nice berries in the wood, and had told her about the eleven swans with golden crowns on their heads.

"There is a way to save your brothers," said the fairy; "but do you think you have courage and perseverance enough to do a thing that is so difficult. Truly the sea is softer than your little pretty hands, and yet it grinds the hard stones away; but then bear in mind, it does not feel the pain your pretty little fingers will feel. And it has no heart either; so that it cannot suffer the fright and the torment that you will be sure to have to go through. Do you see these nettles in my left hand? A great number of this kind grow round about the place where you sleep. These only, and those that are sometimes found upon the graves in the churchyard, are fit for the work which you must take in hand. But, remember, you must pluck them yourself, let them sting and blister you as they will. Bruise the nettles with your feet, taking all the stiffness out of them, and then you will have hemp. With this hemp you must weave eleven coats of mail, with long sleeves, which you must throw over the eleven wild swans. If you manage this, which I hope you will, the spell that enchants your brothers will be broken at once. But above all, do not forget what I am going to say to you. From the very moment you

begin your work, to the hour, nay, to the very last minute that ends it, even if it takes years to finish it, you must not speak a single word. The first syllable that passed your lips would be like a dagger in the hearts of your brothers: their life hangs upon your tongue. Now, be sure to mind all I have said!"

And as the young girl slept, the fairy touched her hand with the nettle, which stung her like a spark of fire. She awoke. It was open day; and close to the spot where she had been sleeping lay a nettle, like the one she had seen in her dream. Then she fell upon her knees, thanked the good Maker of all things for His mercy, and went out of the cave to begin her work. She plunged her hand into the nettles, which felt like burning coals. They raised large blisters on her hands and arms; yet she was willing enough to suffer all this, if she could but save her dear brothers. She bruised every nettle with her naked feet, and wove the green hemp with her sore fingers.

Directly after sunset her brothers returned, and they were not a little astonished to find her so silent. They at first thought it was some new enchantment that their wicked step-mother had laid upon her; but afterwards, when they saw their dear sister's hands so sadly blistered by

the nettles, they understood what she was doing for their sakes; and the youngest of them cried most bitterly. When, lo and behold! wherever his tears fell, she ceased to feel pain, and all the burning went away.

She passed the whole night at her work; for she could not rest till she had saved her dear brothers. The whole of the next day, while the swans were abroad, she sat at her lonely task; but never had the time passed so quickly as then. One coat of mail was already finished, and she made all the haste she could to begin the next.

But, on a sudden, the merry notes of the bugle, and the shrill halloo of the hunters, were heard in the mountains. The little bashful princess trembled for fear. The noise drew nearer. She distinctly heard the cry of the hounds. In great dismay, and without knowing what to do, she withdrew into the cave, bound up all the nettles that she had plucked and bruised in a bundle, and sat down upon it, as if she had made up her mind to do her very utmost to defend the treasure that was most precious to her.

At this moment, a large savage dog sprang out of the bushes, and then a second and a third; they bayed very loud, then they ran back, and came out again. In a very few minutes the hunters were standing before the cave, and the

handsomest of them all was the king of the country. He hurried forward to Elfrida: never had he seen a more beautiful maid.

"How came you hither, lovely child?" said he.

Elfrida shook her head sorrowfully: she dared not speak, for that was as much as her brothers' lives were worth; and she hid her hands in her apron, that the king might not see what she was obliged to suffer.

"Follow me," said he; "you must not remain here. If you are as good as you are pretty, I will clothe you in silk and velvet; I will place the golden crown upon your head, and you shall live in the most splendid palace I have." So saying, he lifted her almost lifeless yet struggling form on his horse.

She wept, and wrung her hands in despair; but the king said: "Comfort yourself, beautiful creature; I only wish to make you happy. One day you will thank me from the bottom of your heart." With this, he galloped away through the beautiful fields, holding his lovely booty on his horse before him; and the huntsmen that were with him dashed after him. Just as the sun was setting, the splendid city where the king lived rose up from the valley with its churches and towers: such a beautiful scene, perhaps, there never was.

The king's first care was to lead the beautiful princess into the palace, where large fountains murmured in the high marble halls, and where the walls and roofs glittered with ornaments and pictures; but she had no eye for any of these things; she could only weep and mourn. Good-naturedly she let the ladies-in-waiting dress her in clothes fit for a queen, braid her hair with pearls, and put silken gloves on her burnt and blistered hands.

And when she stood before them in all her splendour, her beauty was so dazzling, that all the courtiers bowed lower than before, and the king chose her at once for his bride. The archbishop, however, shook his head very thoughtfully, and whispered to his friends that the lovely forest-maid was certainly a witch, and that she only dazzled the eyes of the king, and ensnared his heart.

But the king turned a deaf ear to what he said: louder he made the music resound, had the most delicious dishes served up, and all sorts of preparations made for still grander rejoicings.

Through gardens full of sweet-smelling flowers Elfrida was led to beautiful rooms, where little girls, all grace and loveliness, floated round her in frolicsome dances. But not a smile escaped her lip; not a glance of joy sparkled in her eye; her

every look and gesture bespoke the deepest sorrow. Now, the king threw open a little side-room, near the one where she was to sleep. It was decked out with costly green carpets, so that it looked just like her cave in the wood. On the floor lay the hemp, which she had made from the nettles, and which, in spite of her dismay at being surprised, she had so carefully done up in a bundle; and from the wall hung the coat of mail which she had already finished. One of the huntsmen had taken away these things as a curiosity, in order afterwards to give them up to his master.

"Here you may live quite at peace," said the king, "and fancy yourself back in your former abode again. Here is the work you were busy at. Even now, sometimes, in all your splendour, it will amuse you to think of days gone by."

When Elfrida saw before her what she had so much at heart, a happy smile stole over her tender lip, and the blood mounted again to her cheeks. She thought again of being able to rescue her brothers; and in the overflow of gratitude she kissed the king's hand; while he on his part pressed her to his throbbing heart, and had all the church bells rung to tell the people of the wedding. The pretty dumb maiden of the wood was to be the queen of the land.

Then the suspicious archbishop whispered evil words in the ear of the king; but they did not find their way to his heart. He would not hear of the marriage being delayed. The archbishop himself had to put the crown on the head of the bride, and in angry spite he squeezed down its narrow rim so hard upon the princess's brow, that he hurt her; but a more painful thing than this was coiling round her heart, namely, sorrow and anxiety about her brothers: this made her think nothing of the bodily pain. Her mouth remained closed. One little word would have been sure to have cost her brothers their life, yet her eyes told how truly she loved the good and handsome king, who did all he could to cheer her.

From day to day her whole soul clave more kindly to him. Oh, if she could but have told him her secret, and the cause of her sorrows! But she was obliged to be mute, and finish her work in silence. For this purpose she stole away at night, and hastened into the little room which had been decked out like her favourite cavern, and the key of which she always kept by her. There she wove one coat of mail after the other; but just as she was about to begin the seventh, she had no more hemp left.

She knew well enough that the nettles which she was to use grew in numbers in the churchyard; but

she was to gather them herself, and how was it possible for her to go thither without being noticed?

"Oh, what is the pain in my fingers," thought she, "to the agony which rends my heart! I must make the venture. Almighty God will not withdraw His hand from me in this hour of need!" And in an agony of fear, as if she were going to do some wicked deed, she stole down by moonlight into the garden, passed through its long avenues into the forsaken streets, and then made her way towards the churchyard. There, upon one of the broadest grave-stones she beheld, to her dismay, a circle of witches sitting,—horrid, ghastly hags. Elfrida had to pass close by them, and they fixed their wicked eyes upon her; but she murmured a low prayer, gathered the stinging nettles as quickly as she could, and carried them home to the palace.

Only one person had seen her on her night-walk: this was the archbishop, who was up and awake while other people were sleeping. Now he was right after all, thought he, in what he had said,—viz. that the queen was not quite what she should be. Beyond a doubt she was a witch and wicked sorceress, and that was why she had won the hearts of the king and all the people.

When the king went to church, the archbishop told him what he had seen, and what he very

much feared. And as the cruel words flowed from his tongue, the carved figures of the saints seemed to shake their heads, as though they would say, "It is not so; Elfrida is innocent!" But the archbishop explained it quite another way, saying it was a sign of her guilt, and that the images shook their heads on account of her sins.

Two big tears trickled down the good king's cheeks. With the seeds of doubt in his bosom he went home; and at night he pretended to be asleep, although no peaceful slumber weighed down his weary eyelids. He noticed how Elfrida got up, and that every night she did the same; and then he always followed her softly, and saw her slip quietly into the little room that was so much like a grotto, and lock the door after her.

Day by day the face of the king looked more gloomy. Elfrida grieved in secret to see this change, but she could not understand the reason of it; and what was she not suffering at her very heart's core on her unhappy brothers' account, who were still flying about like wild swans, far out of her sight! Her tears fell fast on the royal purple and velvet; there they lay like glistening diamonds, and all who saw how bright they were, wished they could be the queen. Now her work was nearly at an end — only one coat of mail was wanting; but then she had no more hemp, and not a single

nettle at hand. Just once more, only just once, she said to herself, she must go out to the churchyard to gather a few handfuls. She trembled to think of her lonely walk, and the hideous witches; but she had made up her mind to face them, and she placed all her trust in the good God, who knows all that will happen to men.

Elfrida went to the churchyard; but the king and the archbishop followed her at a distance. They lost sight of her in the grated gateway; and when they came nearer, the witches were sitting upon the grave-stone, just as Elfrida had seen them. Oh, with what horror did the good king turn away his face from the frightful sight; for in the very midst of them he thought he saw her who had become his bride!

"The people must be her judges," said he, with a faltering voice. And the sentence of the people was—"That she should be burnt alive!"

Then, from the gorgeous rooms where the king lived, she was dragged into a dark damp cell, where the wind whistled through a scanty window, that was guarded by rusty bars. Instead of silk and velvet, they gave her the nettles which she had gathered in the churchyard, tied together with a thick piece of rope. These, they said, she might lay under her head as a pillow, and the coarse stinging coats of mail were to serve her as

bed and covering. They could not have given her any thing she liked so well; for she was now able to go on with her toilsome task, and with double earnestness she prayed to God to help her. The boys in the streets outside sang songs in mockery of her, and not a soul said a kind word to comfort her.

But, hark! towards evening, through the iron bars came the whistling noise of a swan's wing. It was her youngest brother; he, at last, had found his sister. And she sobbed for joy, although there was scarcely a doubt that that night would be her last. But how glad was she to think that her work was nearly finished, and that her brothers were there. The archbishop came to pass the last few hours with her; he had promised the king he would do so. But she shook her head, and with her every look and gesture begged him to go away;—on that eventful night she had to finish her work, or else all would be in vain—all her grief, her tears, her silence, and her sleepless nights. The archbishop took his leave with words of anger; but poor Elfrida knew that she was innocent, so she eagerly went on with her task.

In the mean while the little mice ran fearlessly about the dungeon: as some small help, they dragged the nettles to her, and laid them down

at her feet. The thrushes perched upon the iron bars of her window, and merrily sang the whole night through, in order that the poor prisoner might not lose her courage. Day had scarcely broke, for it wanted a full hour to the time when the sun would rise in all the splendour that he wears in summer. At this moment the eleven brothers stood before the palace-gate, and earnestly entreated to be led into the king's presence; but the answer they received was, that "that was quite impossible; since the night was not over, and the king was asleep, and they dare not wake him." They begged, they threatened, till the watch came, and even the king himself came out at last to ask what the noise was about; when, alas, the sun rose, and the princes were not any where to be found: there were only eleven wild swans to be seen flying away over the palace.

A countless throng of people streamed out of the gates to witness the burning of the queen. A wretched horse, a mere walking skeleton, drew the creaking car that she sat in. They had dressed her in a frock of coarse sackcloth. Her long beautiful hair was all dishevelled, falling loosely over her peaceful brow and fair angelic face. Her cheeks were pale as death; her lips slightly moved; whilst her fingers, in the last

efforts of despair, twirled and twisted the green hemp of the nettles. Even on her way to that torturing death, she would not give up the work she had begun: the ten coats of mail lay at her feet, and she was busy at the eleventh.

The people laughed at her cruelly all this time. "Just look at the witch, how she bites her lips!" said they, one and all; "there she sits with her nasty conjuring trumpery. Let us tear the wicked stuff in a thousand pieces!" So saying, they all rushed towards her, in order to rob her by force of her treasure, that dear jewel, that sweet offering of sisterly love; when all at once eleven white swans came flying that way. They settled round her in the executioner's cart, and flapped their large wide wings.

The crowd fell back in dismay. "That is a sign from heaven," whispered many of them; "she is innocent to a certainty;" but they did not dare to say so aloud.

Now the rude officer took the unhappy queen by the hand, when, in a moment, she threw the eleven pieces of mail over the swans; and, lo, at her side stood eleven stately princes! However, the youngest had a swan's wing in the place of one of his arms; for one sleeve was wanting to his coat, since his good sister Elfrida, with all her zeal, unequalled as it was, had not been quite able to finish it.

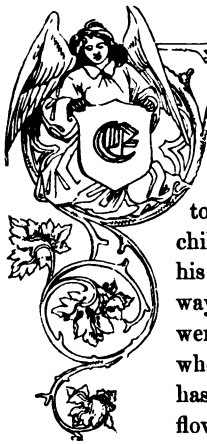
"Now I may speak," cried she. "I am innocent!"

And the people, who saw what had happened, bowed down before her, as if she were one of the saints of old; while she herself fell lifeless, and overcome with anxiety and fear, into her brothers' arms.

"Yes, she is innocent!" cried her eldest brother; and then he related all that had happened. But whilst he spoke, there came a sweet balmy scent, like that of a million of roses; for every piece of wood round the stake had taken root, and put forth branches of green; so that instead of the horrid flames there stood a high sweet-smelling hedge before them, full of dark-red roses. But at the very top of this was a brilliant white flower: it shone like some silvery little star, which hovers like a crown over the purple of the morning. The king drew near; he plucked the flower, and laid it on Elfrida's bosom; and then from her short death-like slumber she awoke to happiness and peace.

And all the church-bells began ringing of themselves; the birds came in flocks to the place; and such a bridal train went back to the palace as no other king ever beheld!

THE ANGEL.



EVERY time a good child dies, an angel of God comes down to earth, takes the little dead child in his arms, spreads out his large white wings, and in this way flies over all the places that were dearest to the little one when it was alive; then, when it has plucked a whole handful of flowers, it carries them up to God in heaven, there to bloom more beautifully than on earth. God, in His goodness, presses all the flowers to His bosom; but to the flower which is dearest to Him He gives a sweet clear voice, so that it can sing and rejoice with the happy hosts around it.

Now this was what one of these angels of God told a little dead child, as he carried it in his arms up to heaven. The child listened, as in a dream: they swept together on light wing over those scenes of home, where the child had formerly played in its lifetime, and they flitted through gardens full of sweet-smelling flowers.

"What flowers shall we take with us, and plant afresh in heaven?" said the angel.

Now there was a single rose-bush close beside them, more beautiful than may often be seen. But some rude hand had wantonly snapped its stem, so that all the little sprigs that a short time before were so fair and green, and which sparkled with such a gay show of half-opened buds, now hung down, withered and sad, on the soft smooth carpet of turf.

"Ah, the poor little tree!" said the child, with a sigh. "Oh, take it with you, that it may bloom again in God's home above!"

And the angel took it with him, at the same time kissing the child for what it had said; and the little one half opened its eyes. They gathered those fine rich flowers, in whose scent and colour man takes delight; neither was the blossom of the despised sloe-tree forgotten, nor the bloom of the prickly wild holly.

"Now we have plenty of flowers," said the

child ; and the angel nodded, as if to say " Yes." But still they did not fly up to heaven just yet. It was in the night-time : there was a holy stillness around them. They stayed a while in the large town near which the child had lived, and hovered up and down one of the narrowest streets, where whole heaps of straw, ashes, and other rubbish gave token of the passing nature of all earthly things. It was just at the time when people were changing their abodes. The little streets looked disordered and filthy. Fragments of pots, plates, and dishes lay all mixed up together, with broken bits of plaster, dirty rags, the crowns of old hats and bonnets — in short, things that presented no pleasant sight to the eye.

And in the midst of this motley scene the angel pointed below to the fragments of a flower-pot, and a clod of earth dried up to the hardness of stone, which had fallen out of the pot, and which, even in this perishing plight, clung fondly as ever to the tangled roots of a large faded wild-flower, that had been thrown, without more ado, into the street, because it was quite dried up and withered.

" We will take that with us," said the angel; " and on our way I will tell you the reason."

And so they flew away from earth ; and the angel told his story thus :—

" In the narrow street down there, in a low-

roofed cellar, lived a poor sick boy. From his earliest years he had been bed-ridden, for an incurable disease preyed upon his tender frame. When his health was at its very best, he could go a few times up and down his room on crutches, but that was all. On some of the fine days in summer, the sunbeams would peep for the space of half an hour into the fore-part of his cellar; and as the little boy sat there, letting the warm sun shine upon him, and looking pleased to see the red blood through his fingers' ends, he would say, 'Yes, to-day he has been out!'

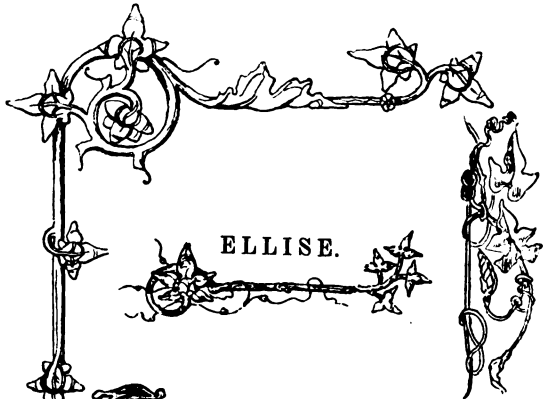
"He only knew the wood in its beautiful spring dress by his neighbour's son bringing him, as a May-day token, the first green twigs of the beech-tree. These he would hold over his head and shoulders, and would dream that he was resting, happy and well, under the green shelter of the beech-trees, with the sun shining, and the birds twittering around him. One day, in spring, his young friend made him a present of some wild-flowers too, among which there chanced to be one with roots. This was accordingly planted in a pot, and placed in the window, close by his bed. And the little plant proved to have been put in by a happy hand: it grew and put forth new sprigs, which clung round the strong parent stem like a merry band of children. Every year the

thankful plant bore sweet-smelling flowers; in its unpretending beauty it became a most beautiful little garden in the eyes of the sick boy,—his own little treasure upon earth. Oh, how diligently he watered it, how he watched it, and what care he took that it should catch every ray of the sun, even to the very last that stole down his lowly window! But the flower itself, in its quiet growth, enwove itself by degrees with his dreams; for on him alone it spent the fulness of that beauty that was scornfully overlooked by others; for him alone it bloomed and smelt so sweetly; his heart and eye alone it gladdened; and he turned to it even in death, when the Lord called him to Him. One year, already, has the little boy been with God: for one year the flower stood forgotten in the window; so of course it withered, and at last, when the people left the house, they threw it into the street among the sweepings. And this is the flower,—the poor faded flower,—which we have woven into our garland; for this flower has been the source of greater joy than the most gorgeous blossoms in the garden of a queen."

"But how do you know all this?" said the child whom the angel was bearing to heaven.

"I know it," replied the angel. "*I* was the poor sick little boy who went on crutches. I know my flower well."

And the child opened his eyes quite wide, to look on the face of the angel, as it beamed with delight; and at that very moment they were in heaven, where joy and happiness reign for ever. And God gave the dead child wings like the angel, with whom it now flew hand in hand. And to the poor faded wild-flower He gave a sweet clear voice, and it sang a song of triumph with all the angels who hovered round God in heaven,—some sweeping on their bright wings quite near to Him, and others in larger circles round these, wider and wider, in endless succession, but all equally happy. And they all sang, both little and great; the good innocent little child who once limped about on his toilsome crutches, as well as the poor wild-flower that had been thrown, all withered, among the sweepings, and which, on the day of moving, had lain among the rubbish in the narrow dirty street.



ELLISE.

THERE was once upon a time a young woman so kind and sweet-tempered that every person loved her. Among the rest, there was an old witch, who lived near where she dwelt, and with whom she was a great favourite. One day this old witch told her she had a nice present to give her. "See," she said, "here is a barley-corn, which, however, is by no means of the same sort as those which grow in the farmer's field, or those we give to the fowls. Now you must plant this in a flower-pot, and then take care and see what happens."

"Thank you a thousand times!" said the young woman. And thereupon she went straight home, and planted the barley-corn the witch had given

her in a flower-pot. Immediately there grew out of it a large handsome flower; but its leaves were all shut close, as if they were buds.

"That is a most beautiful flower," said the woman, while she bent down to kiss its red and yellow leaves; but scarcely had her lips pressed the flower, than it gave forth a loud sound, and opened its cup. And now the woman was able to see that it was a tulip; and in the midst of the cup, down at the bottom, there sat a small and most lovely little maiden; her height was about one inch, and on that account the woman named her Ellise.

She made the little thing a cradle out of a walnut-shell, gave her a blue violet-leaf for a mattress, and a rose-leaf for a coverlid. In this cradle Ellise slept at night-time, and during the day she played upon the table. The woman had set a plate filled with water upon the table, which she surrounded with flowers, and the flower-stalks all rested on the edge of the water; on the water floated a large tulip-leaf, and upon the tulip-leaf sat the little Ellise, and sailed from one side of the plate to the other; and for this she used two white horse-hairs for oars. The whole effect was very charming; and Ellise could sing too, but with such a delicate little voice as we have never heard here.

One night, as she lay in her bed, an ugly toad hopped in to her through the broken window-pane. It was a large and very hideous toad; and it sprang at once upon the table, where Ellise lay asleep under the rose-leaf.

"That would be a nice little wife, now, for my son," said the toad; and seized, as she said it, the walnut-shell in her mouth, and hopped with it out through the window into the garden again.

Through the garden flowed a broad stream, but its banks were marshy, and among the marshes lived the toad and her son. Ha, how hideous the son was too; exactly like his mother he was; and all that he could say, when he saw the sweet little maiden in the walnut-shell, was, "Koax! koax! breckke-kek!"

"Don't talk so loud," said the old one to him, "else you'll wake her, and then she might easily run away from us, for she is lighter than swans'-down. We will set her upon a large plant in the stream; that will be a whole island for her, and then she cannot run away from us; while we, down in the mud, will build the house for you two to live in."

In the stream there were innumerable large plants, which all seemed as if they floated on the water; the most distant one was, at the same time, the largest; and thither swam the old toad,

and set down the walnut-shell, with the little maiden upon it.

Early on the following morning the little Ellise awoke; and when she looked about her, and saw where she was, that her new dwelling-place was surrounded on all sides by water, and that there remained no possible way for her to reach land again, she began to weep most bitterly.

Meanwhile the old toad sat in the mud, and adorned the building with reeds and yellow flowers, that it might be quite grand for her future daughter-in-law; and then, in company with her hideous son, swam to the little leaf-island where Ellise lay.

She now wanted to fetch her pretty little bed, that it might at once be placed in the new chamber, before Ellise herself was brought there. The old toad bent herself courteously before her in the water, while she presented her son in these words: "You see here my son, who is to be your husband, and you two shall live together charmingly down in the mud."

"Koax! koax! breckke-kek!" was all that the bridegroom could find to say.

And therewith they both seized upon the beautiful little bed, and swam away with it; while Ellise sat alone upon the leaf, and cried very much; for she did not like at all to live with the frightful toad, much less have her odious son for

her husband. Now the little fishes which swam about under the water had seen the toad, and heard, moreover, perfectly well all that she said; they, therefore, raised their heads above water, that they might have a look at the beautiful little creature. No sooner had they seen her, than they were, one and all, quite moved by her beauty; and it seemed to them very hard that such a sweet maiden should become the prey of an ugly toad.

They assembled themselves, therefore, round about the green stalk from which grew the leaf whereon Ellise sat, and gnawed it with their teeth until it came in two, and then away floated Ellise and the leaf far, far away, where the toad could come no more.

And so sailed the little maiden by towns and villages; and when the birds upon the trees beheld her, they sang out, "Oh, what a lovely little girl!" But away, away floated the leaf, always further and further. Ellise made quite a foreign journey upon it.

For some time a small white butterfly had hovered over her, and at last he set himself down on her leaf, because he was very much pleased with Ellise, and she too was very glad of the visit; for now the toad could not come near her, and the country through which she travelled was so beautiful. The sun shone so brightly on the

water that it glittered like gold. And now the idea occurred to her to loosen her girdle, bind one end of it to the butterfly, the other on to the leaf: she did this; and then she flew on much faster, and saw much more of the world than she would have done.

But at last there came by a cockchafer, who seized her with his long claws round her slender waist, and flew away with her to a tree; while on swam the leaf, and the butterfly was obliged to follow, for he could not get loose, so fast and firm had Ellise bound him.

Ah, how terrified was poor Ellise when the cockchafer carried her off to the tree! But her sorrow over the little butterfly was quite as great; for she knew he must certainly perish, unless by some good accident he should chance to free himself from the green leaf. But all this made no impression upon the cockchafer, who set her upon a large leaf, gave her some honey to eat, and told her she was very charming, although not a bit like a chafer. And now appeared all the other cockchafers who dwelt upon this tree, who waited upon Ellise, and examined her from top to toe; while the young-lady chafers turned up their feelers, and said, "She has only two legs! how very wretched that looks!" and, added they, "she has no feelers whatever, and is as thin in the body

as a human being! Ah, it is really hideous!" and all the young-lady cockchafers cried out, "Ah, it is perfectly hideous!" And yet Ellise was so charming; and so felt the cockchafer: but at last, because all the lady-chafers thought her ugly, he began to think so too, and resolved he would have nothing more to do with her; "She might go," he said, "wherever she liked;" and with these words he flew with her to the ground, and set her upon a daisy. And now the poor little thing wept bitterly, to find herself so hideous that not even a cockchafer would have any thing to do with her. But notwithstanding this decisive opinion of the young-lady cockchafers, Ellise was the loveliest, most elegant little creature in the world, as delicate and beautiful as a young rose-leaf.

The whole summer through the poor little maiden lived alone in the great forest; and she wove herself a bed out of fine grass, and hung it up to rock beneath a creeper, that it might not be blown away by the wind and rain; she plucked herself sweets out of the flowers for food, and drank of the fresh dew that fell every morning upon the grass. And so the summer and the autumn passed away. All the birds which had sung so sweetly to Ellise left her, and went away; the trees lost all their green; the flowers withered; and the great creeper which until now

had been her shelter, shrivelled away to a bare yellow stalk. The poor little thing shivered with cold, for her clothes were now worn out, and her form was so tender and delicate that she certainly would perish with cold. It began also to snow; and every flake which touched her was to her what a great heap would be to us, for her whole body was only one inch long.

Close beside the forest in which Ellise lay, there was a corn-field; but the corn had long since been reaped, and now only the dry stubble rose above the earth; yet for Ellise this was a great forest, and hither she came. So she reached the house of a field-mouse, which was formed of a little hole under the stubble. Here dwelt the field-mouse, warm and comfortable, with her store-room full of food for the winter, and near at hand a pretty kitchen and eating-room. Poor Ellise stepped up to the door, and begged for a little grain of barley; for she had tasted nothing for the whole day.

"Poor little creature," said the field-mouse, who was very kind-hearted, "come into my warm room, and eat something." And when now she was much pleased with Ellise, she added, "You may, if you like, spend the winter here with me; but you must keep my house clean and neat, and tell me stories; for I am very fond of hearing stories."

Ellise did as the field-mouse wished; and, as a reward for her trouble, was made comfortable with her.

"Now we shall have a visit," said the field-mouse to her one day. "My neighbour is accustomed to pay me a visit every week. He is much richer than I am, for he has several beautiful rooms, and wears the most costly velvet coat. Now, if you could only have him for your husband, you would be nicely provided for; but he does not see very sharply, that's one thing. Only you must tell him all the best stories you can think of."

But Ellise would hear nothing of it, for she could not endure the neighbour, for he was nothing more nor less than a mole. He came, as was expected, to pay his respects to the field-mouse, and wore his handsome velvet coat as usual. The field-mouse said he was very rich, and very well informed, and that his house was twenty times larger than hers. Well informed he might be; but he could not endure the sunshine, or the flowers, and spoke with scorn both of the one and the other, although he had never seen either. Ellise was obliged to sing before him, and she sang two songs: "Chafers, fly; the sun is shining!" and "The priest goes to the field." Then the mole became very much in love with her be-

cause of her beautiful voice, but he took good care not to shew it, for he was a cautious sensible fellow.

Very lately he had made a long passage from his dwelling to that of his neighbour, and he gave permission to Ellise and the field-mouse to go in it as often as they pleased; yet he begged of them not to be startled at the dead bird which lay at the entrance. It was certainly a bird lately dead, for all the feathers were still upon him: it seemed to have been frozen exactly there where the mole had made the entrance of his passage.

Mr. Neighbour now took a piece of tinder in his mouth, and stepped on before the ladies, that he might lighten the way for them; and as he came to the place where the dead bird lay, he struck with his snout on the ground, so that the earth rolled away, and a large opening appeared, through which the daylight shone in. And now Ellise could see the dead bird quite well,—it was a swallow. The pretty wings were pressed against the body, and the feet and head covered over by the feathers.

"The poor bird has died of cold," said Ellise; and it grieved her very much for the dear little animal, for she was very fond of birds, since they sang to her all through the summer.

But the mole kicked him with his foot, and

said, "The fine fellow has done with his twittering now! It must indeed be dreadful to be born a bird! Heaven be praised that none of my children have turned out birds! Stupid things! they have nothing in the wide world but their 'quivit,' and when the winter comes, die they must!"

"Yes," returned the field-mouse; "you, a thoughtful and reflecting man, may well say that. What, indeed, has a bird beyond its twitter when the winter comes? He must only hunger and freeze."

Ellise was silent; but when the others had turned their backs upon the bird, she raised up its feathers gently, and kissed its closed eyes.

"Perhaps it was you," she said softly, "who sang me such beautiful songs! How often you have made me happy and merry, you dear bird!"

And now the mole stopped up the opening again, through which the daylight fell, and then accompanied the young ladies home. But Ellise could not sleep the whole night long. She got up, therefore, wove a covering of hay, carried it away to the dead bird, and covered him with it on all sides, in order that he might rest warmer upon the cold ground. "Farewell, you sweet pretty little bird!" said she. "Farewell! and let me thank you a thousand times for your friendly

song this summer, when the trees were all green, and the sun shone down so warm upon us all!" And therewith she laid her little head on the bird's breast; but started back, for it seemed to her as if something moved within. It was the bird's heart; he was not dead, but benumbed; and now he came again to life as the warmth reached him.

In the autumn the swallows fly away to warmer countries; and when a weak one is among them, and the cold freezes him, he falls upon the ground, and lies there as if dead, until the cold snow covers him.

Ellise was frightened at first, when the bird raised itself; for to her he was a great big giant; but she soon collected herself again, pressed the hay covering close round the exhausted little animal, and then went to fetch the curled mint leaves which served for her own covering, that she might lay it over his head.

The following night she slipped away to the bird again, whom she found now quite revived, but yet so very weak, that he could only open his eyes now and then, to look at Ellise, who lighted up his face with a little piece of tinder.

"I thank you a thousand times, you lovely little child," said the sick swallow; "I am now so thoroughly warmed through, that I shall soon gain

my strength again, and shall be able to fly out in the warm sunshine."

"Oh, it is a great deal too cold out there," returned Ellise, "it snows and freezes so hard! only just stay now in your warm bed, and I will take such care of you!"

She brought the bird some water to drink out of a leaf; and then he related to her how he had so hurt his wing against a thorny bush, that he could not fly away to the warm countries with his comrades, and at last had fallen exhausted to the ground, where all consciousness left him.

The little swallow remained here the whole winter, and Ellise attended to him, and became every day more and more fond of him; yet she said nothing at all about it to the mole or the field-mouse; for she knew well enough already that neither of them could bear the poor bird.

As soon, however, as the summer came, and the warm sunbeams penetrated the earth, the swallow said good-bye to Ellise, who had now opened the hole in the ground, through which the mole let the light fall in. The sun shone so kindly, that the swallow turned and asked Ellise, his dear little nurse, whether she would not fly away with him. She could sit very nicely upon the swallow's back, and then they would go away together to the green forest. But Ellise thought it would

grieve the good field-mouse if she went away secretly, and therefore she was obliged to refuse the bird's kind offer.

"Then, once more farewell, you kind, good maiden," said the swallow; and therewith he flew out into the sunshine. Ellise looked sorrowfully after him, and the tears rushed into her eyes; for she was very fond of the good bird.

"Quivit! quivit!" sang the swallow, and away he flew to the forest.

And now Ellise was very mournful, for she hardly ever left her dark hole. The corn grew up far above her head, and formed quite a thick wood round the house of the field-mouse.

"Now you can spend the summer in working at your wedding-clothes," said the field-mouse; for the neighbour, the wearisome mole, had at last really proposed for Ellise. "I will give you every thing you want, that you may have all things comfortable about you when you are the mole's wife."

And now Ellise was obliged to sit all day long busy at her clothes, and the field-mouse took four clever spiders into her service, and kept them weaving day and night. Every evening came the mole to pay his visit, and every evening he expressed his wish that the summer would come to an end, and the heat cease; for then, when the

winter was here, his wedding should take place. But Ellise was not at all happy to hear this; for she could hardly bear even to look upon the ugly mole, for all his expensive velvet coat. Every evening and every morning she went out at the door, and when the wind blew the ears of corn apart, and she could look upon the blue heaven, she saw it was so beautiful out in the open air, that she wished she could only see the dear swallow once more: but the swallow never came; he preferred rejoicing himself in the warm sunbeams in the green woods.

By the time autumn came, Ellise had prepared all her wedding-garments.

"In four weeks your wedding will take place," said the field-mouse to her. But Ellise wept, and said she did not want to have the stupid mole for a husband.

"Fiddle-de-dee," answered the field-mouse: "come, do not be obstinate, or I shall be obliged to bite you with my sharp teeth. Is he not a good husband that you are going to have? Why, even the queen has not such a fine velvet coat to shew as he has! His kitchen and his cellar are well stocked; and you ought rather to thank Providence for providing so well for you."

So the wedding was to be. Already was the mole come to fetch away Ellise, who from hence-

forth was to live always with him, deep under the earth, where no sunbeam could ever come. The little maiden was very unhappy that she must take her farewell of the friendly sun, which, at all events, she saw at the door of the field-mouse's house.

"Farewell, thou beloved sun!" said she, and raised her hands towards heaven, while she advanced a few steps from the door; for already was the corn again reaped, and she stood once more among the stubble in the field. "Adieu, adieu!" she repeated, and threw her arms round a flower that stood near her. "Greet the little swallow for me, when you see him again," added she.

"Quivit! quivit!" echoed near her in the same moment; and, as Ellise raised her eyes, she saw her well-known little swallow fly past. As soon as the swallow perceived Ellise, he too became quite joyful, and hastened at once to his kind nurse; and she told him how unwilling she was to have the ugly mole for her husband, and that she must go down deep into the earth, where neither sun nor moon could ever look upon her: and with these words she burst into tears.

"See, now," said the swallow, "the cold winter is coming again, and I am flying away to the warm countries; will you come and travel with

me? I will carry you gladly on my back. You need only to bind yourself fast with your girdle; so we can fly away far from the disagreeable mole and his dark house, far over mountains and valleys, to the beautiful countries where the sun shines much warmer than it does here; where there is summer always, and always beautiful flowers blooming. Come, be comforted, and fly away with me, you dear, kind Ellise, who saved my life when I lay frozen in the earth."

"Yes, I will go with you!" cried Ellise joyfully. She mounted on the back of the swallow, set her feet upon his outspread wings, bound herself with her girdle to a strong feather, and flew off with the swallow through the air, over woods and lakes, valleys and mountains. Very often Ellise suffered from the cold when they went over icy glaciers and snowy rocks; but then she concealed herself under the wings and among the feathers of the bird, and merely put out her head to gaze and wonder at all the glorious things around her.

At last, too, they came into the warm countries. The sun shines there clearer than with us; the heavens were a great deal higher, and on the walls and in the hedges grew the most beautiful blue and green grapes. In the woods hung ripe citrons and oranges, and the air was full of the scent of

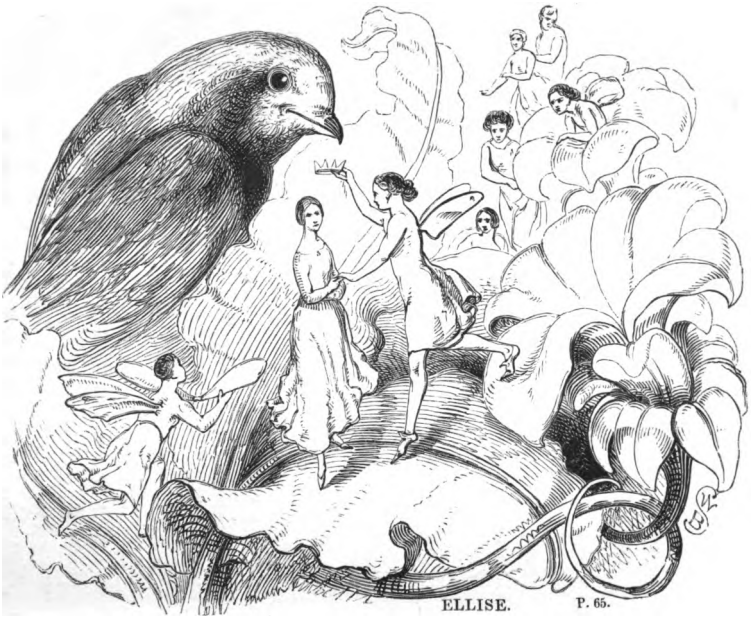
thyme and myrtle, while beautiful children ran in the roads, playing with the gayest-coloured butterflies. But further and further flew the swallow, and below them it became more and more beautiful. By the side of a lake, beneath graceful acacias, there rose an ancient marble palace; the vines clung around the pillars, while above them, on their summits, hung many a swallow's nest. Into one of these nests the bird carried Ellise.

"Here is my house," said he; "but look you for one of the loveliest flowers which grow down there, for your home, and I will carry you there, and you shall have every thing you can possibly want."

"That would be glorious indeed!" said Ellise; and she clapped her hands together for very joy.

Upon the earth there lay a large white marble pillar, which had been thrown down, and was broken into three pieces; but between its ruins there grew the very fairest flowers, all white, the loveliest you would ever wish to see.

The swallow flew with Ellise to one of these flowers, and set her down upon a broad leaf; but how astonished was Ellise when she saw that a little man sat in this flower, who was as fine and transparent as glass! He wore a graceful little crown upon his head, and had beautiful wings on his shoulders; and withal he was not



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a bit bigger than Ellise herself. He was the angel of this flower. In every flower dwell a pair of such like little men and women; but this was the king of all the flower-angels.

"Oh, look how handsome this king is!" whispered Ellise into the ear of the swallow. The little prince was somewhat startled by the arrival of the large bird; but when he saw Ellise, he became instantly in love with her, for she was the most charming little maiden that he had ever seen. So he took off his golden crown, set it upon Ellise, and asked what was her name, and whether she would be his wife; if so, she should be queen over all the other flowers. Ah, this was a very different husband to the son of the hideous toad, and the heavy, stupid mole, with his velvet coat! So Ellise said "yes" to the beautiful prince; and now from all the other flowers appeared either a gentleman or a lady, all wonderfully elegant and beautiful, to bring presents to Ellise. The best present offered to her was a pair of exquisite white wings, which were immediately fastened on her; and now she could fly from flower to flower.

All were delighted at this. The swallow sat above in his nest, and sang as well as he possibly could, though at the same time he was sorely grieved; for he was so fond of Ellise, that he wanted never to part from her again.

"You shall not be called *Ellise* any more," said the flower-angel; "for it is not at all a pretty name, and you are so pretty. But from this moment you shall be called Maia."

"Farewell, farewell!" cried the little swallow; and away he flew again, out of the warm land, far, far away to the little Denmark, where he had his summer nest over the window of the good man who knows how to tell stories, that he might sing his Quivit! quivit! before him. And it is from the same little swallow that we have learnt all this wonderful history.

THE

LITTLE SWINEHERD.

THERE was once a poor prince. This poor prince had a kingdom to rule over, that, small as it was, was still large enough to allow him to marry: and this was just what he intended to do.

To be sure, it was rather bold of him to venture on the emperor's daughter, and bluntly to speak his wants, saying, at once, "Will you have me?" But this he might very well do, for his renown had spread far and wide; although there were a hundred princesses who would have given him an off-hand refusal. Did *she* do so, I wonder? We shall see.

On the grave of the prince's father grew a rose-tree, and a rose-tree, too, that had not its equal.

This tree bore but every fifth year, and then only one single flower, and not even a bud beside; yet this little flower smelt so sweetly that people forgot all their cares and sorrows when they inhaled its fragrance. Besides this, the prince had a nightingale that sang as though all the most beautiful melodies were hidden in its throat. This rose and this nightingale the princess was to have; and so both flower and bird were carefully packed in large silver cases, and conveyed in perfect safety to the beautiful daughter of the emperor.

When the things arrived, the emperor had them brought to him into the grand saloon, where the princess was running about with her ladies-in-waiting, and playing at "Puss in the corner." When she saw the large cases and the presents inside them, she clapped her hands for joy.

"If it were but a little pussy cat!" said she; and then appeared the rose-tree with the beautiful sweet-smelling rose.

"Ah, how prettily the flower is made!" cried all the ladies-in-waiting at once.

"It is more than pretty," said the emperor, "it is a dear little thing."

But the princess put her hand to the rose-tree to feel it, and she almost began to cry.

"Oh, dear me, papa," said she, "the tree is not a sham one, but a real one!"

"Oh, dear," repeated the ladies of the court; "it really is a real one!"

"But let us first see what there is in the other case before we are angry," said the emperor; and then forth came the wondrous little nightingale. Oh, how beautifully it sung; it was quite impossible to be angry then.

"Superbe! charmant!" cried all the ladies of the court in concert; for they all talked French, and each seemed to try to be noisier than the rest.

"How much the bird reminds me of the musical box that our dear sainted empress used to have!" said an old cavalier with a sigh. "Yes; it has the very same tone, and just the same way of singing."

"Ah, so it has!" replied the emperor; and he wept like a little child.

"But they will not make me believe that the bird is a real one!" said the princess in a pettish tone.

"Yes, to be sure it is a real bird," answered the people who had brought it.

"Well, then, let it fly," said the princess; for she had now quite made up her mind not to allow the prince to come.

But the prince was not to be put out by any thing of this sort; so he smeared his face all over, brown and black, drew his cap as low down as he could, and knocked at the door.

"Good day, emperor," said he; "might not I become a servant in the palace here?"

"Yes; why not?" returned the emperor; "I just now want a man to look after the swine, for we have swine here in plenty."

And in this way the prince was formally appointed to the place of swineherd. They shewed him a sorry little room below stairs close by the pigsty, and there he had to live. All the day long he sat at work; and when evening came, he had made a pretty little kettle, set all round with bells; and as soon as the water boiled in the kettle, these little bells sounded in a silvery peal, and played the famous old tune,

> "Ah, my William, William, dear,
> No more here, no more here!"

But the cleverest thing of all about the kettle was, that when you put your finger in the steam that came from it, you could at once smell the savour of every dish that was being cooked at every fire in the town. And this, indeed, was something very different from that little natural rose.

Now the princess and all her ladies came out walking that way; and when she heard the pretty tune, she stood still, and seemed so pleased, for she could play the very same thing herself. It was

the only tune she knew, and she used to play it off quite easily with one finger.

"Hark, it is just the piece that I play!" said she. "This must be quite an educated young swineherd. Just listen! go down into the sty, and ask him how much the instrument costs."

So one of the court-ladies was obliged to do as she was bid, and go down to the nasty pigsty. However, she first put wooden slippers over her dainty silk shoes, that they might not be spoiled.

"What do you want for your kettle?" asked the lady-in-waiting without more ado.

"I only want ten kisses from the princess," returned the little swineherd.

"Oh, shocking!" cried the lady, in utter dismay.

"Well, less than that it cannot be, and that is cheap enough," said the young swineherd, with the arch look of a cunning artist.

"He is rude enough, indeed!" thought the princess, when she received a message she so little expected; and so saying, she walked away. But she had only gone a few steps, when the little bells on the kettle struck up far more beautifully than before, so that she could not keep from singing in concert with them,

"Ah, my William, William, dear,
No more here, no more here!"

"Listen to me," said the princess; "go and

ask him if he will take ten kisses from my ladies-in-waiting."

"No; I am much obliged to you," was the young swineherd's ready answer; "ten kisses of the princess, or I keep the kettle."

"How stupid this is of him!" said the princess, with a sigh; then, resolutely mustering up all her courage, "Well," added she, "you must all of you form a circle round me with your faithful persons, so that no one may see me; for really it is not proper: and yet I would not go without the kettle for any thing."

So when the swineherd reached the spot where they stood, the ladies formed a close circle round her, and spread out their clothes as wide as they could. Behind this strange sort of screen the little keeper of pigs received ten kisses from the beautiful emperor's daughter, who, on her part, gained possession of the kettle.

Then what joy there was! That whole evening and all the next day the water had to be kept boiling in the kettle; and there was not a hearth or fireplace of any sort throughout the whole town but she knew what was being cooked at it, whether it was in the house of the high chamberlain or in that of a cobbler. The young ladies of the court, and all the waiting women with them, danced and clapped their hands for joy.

"We know who has mock-turtle and pancakes to-day," said they; "we know who eats furmity and rashers of bacon. Oh, how delightfully interesting!" cried they all in a rapture of delight.

"Yes, but mind not to say a word about it, for I am the emperor's daughter," said the young damsel, cautioning them to be careful, while she felt all the time the happiest woman in the world, holding sway, as she did, over the precious little caldron.

"Oh, do not be in any trouble about that!" cried they all with one voice. However, all this time the cunning young swineherd, or prince in disguise (though the people did not know but that he really was a little swineherd), never thought of letting the day slip away without doing something. So the next thing he did was, to make a rattle which, if you swung it round ever so lightly, played all the waltzes and country dances that had been known from the beginning of the world until then.

The princess one day went past the same spot again. "Oh, that is superb indeed!" said she, almost shouting for joy. "I never heard such clever music before. Just go, Cunigunda,—no, Feodora, go you, and ask the little artist how much the instrument costs;—but no kisses, mind!"

"He wants a hundred kisses from the princess

for it;" was the answer that the lady brought back.

"He is mad, I think," cried the princess; and she went her way. But she had only gone a very few steps, when she stopped short again: "We ought to encourage art," said she. "Never mind, though I am the emperor's daughter; go and tell him he shall have ten kisses, just as he did yesterday; the rest he must get from my ladies-in waiting."

"Oh, no; we should not like that at all," said the ladies, venturing on a reply.

"Do not talk such nonsense," said the princess; "if I can kiss him, you may do so too. Do you forget that I give you food and money?" So the messenger had to go down once more to the sty.

"A hundred kisses from the princess, or we each keep our own," replied the swineherd. So this answer was brought to the princess.

"Well, take your places, and form a ring," was the princess's order. So all the ladies took their places, and formed a circle round their gracious mistress: and now the hundred kisses began.

"What can all that noise and bustle below mean?" said the emperor, as he happened to step out upon the landing-place: he rubbed his eyes and put his spectacles straight. "Oh, I see; it is the ladies of the court," continued he, "at some

of their romps. But they are carrying things a little too far. I must really take the trouble to go down, and see what I can do to bring them to order."

So saying, he pulled up his slippers at the heel, —in point of fact they had been state shoes, with very high sides, which now, in a degraded form, were doing their last services as slippers to his imperial majesty.

Oh, it would have made you laugh to see the good old man bustling along! As soon as he reached the court below, he stole along quite softly; and the ladies of the court were so busy in counting the kisses and seeing fair play, that not a single one of them noticed the emperor coming; so that he got close up to them, and stood on tiptoe, the better to gain a view of the strange group before him.

"What is all this?" cried he, all at once, when, to his horror, he saw them kissing and kissing as if they never would stop. Then, carried away by a just feeling of indignation, he threw his slipper at their heads just as the saucy swineherd was receiving his ninety-sixth kiss. "Out with you, out with you!" cried the emperor, no longer able to set bounds to his rage. And so both the princess and the little swineherd were driven out of his kingdom for ever.

There the beautiful princess stood, and cried till her blue eyes were quite red with weeping. But the swineherd upbraided her, and the rain fell in torrents from the sky.

"Oh, miserable, wretched creature that I am!" said the emperor's daughter with a groan, and looking as bewildered as if she had dropped from the clouds. "Would that I had taken the polite and comely king's son, who sued so humbly for my hand! Oh, heavens, how unhappy I am!"

But now the little swineherd stepped behind a tree, wiped all the black and brown off his face, cast aside his filthy clothes, and shewed himself once more in his princely dress, looking so enchantingly lovely, that the princess could not help making him one curtsey after the other.

"I can do no more than scorn you," said he, as he turned his back upon her. "You would not have an honest, true-hearted prince. You treated the rose and the nightingale with disdain: but for the sake of a paltry toy, you could kiss the little swineherd to your heart's content. Now see what you get by it!"

So saying, he went off at once to his own kingdom, and shut the door of his palace behind him. Well might the emperor's daughter sing—

'Oh, my William, William, dear,
No more here, no more here!"

THE FLYING BOX.

IN a town which it would now perhaps be hard to find on the map, lived a merchant. This merchant was so rich that he could have paved with silver crowns the whole of the street in which his house stood, and almost the little lane that led into it, into the bargain. But he did not do that. No, he knew how to make better use of his money; for if he laid out a penny, he was sure to get a shilling in return for it; such a clever merchant was he. But, at last—he died!

Now his son came into the possession of all his money. He lived a merry life, went every night to balls and dances, made paper kites of bank-notes, and passed an hour now and

then, by way of fun, in throwing golden coins, instead of stones, over the smooth surface of the large pond just under his window. It was no wonder, then, if the money grew less and less; and it really did so. At last he had nothing left but sixpence, and no clothing but a pair of slippers and an old dressing-gown. Now, of course, his friends cared no more about him, as they were ashamed of being seen with him in the street. But one of them, who was a good-natured fellow, sent him an old box, with the well-meant advice that he should pack up and be off as quickly as possible. That was all very fine; but the poor thoughtless creature had nothing to pack up; and so he seated himself in the box.

A droll piece of stuff was the box. As soon as the lock was pressed, the box could fly. And *fly* it did, to the no small astonishment of the young man, who now went bounce up into the sky, like an air-balloon, far away above the clouds. Still he went on and on. Many a time there was a cracking in the bottom of the box, and the venturous sailor was very much afraid that his wooden boat would break in two; and then what a pretty jump he would have! However, no accident happened; and he came at last to the land of the Turks. He hid the box carefully under some withered leaves; and made off without more ado

to the town, near the gates of which he had been set down in so strange a manner. This he might very well venture to do; for all the Turks wen about, as he did, in dressing-gown and slippers.

Now on his way to the town, a nurse met him with a little Turkish child in her arms.

"Hark, you Turkish woman!" said he; "what palace is that close by the town, where the uppermost windows tower up so high?"

"It is the palace where the king's daughter lives," answered the woman; "it has been foretold her that her heart will ache very sorely one day on account of a lover; for which reason none may go to see her unless the king and queen are with them."

"My best thanks to you," returned the son of the merchant; and he made all the haste he could back to the wood, took his seat in the box, flew up on to the roof, and crept through a window into the princess's room.

The princess was lying asleep upon the sofa. She was so wondrously beautiful, that he could not help kissing her on the spot. She awoke in great alarm; but he told her he was sent by the Prophet of the Turks, and he had come down to her through the air to honour her with his presence. And against this she had nothing to say.

So they sat side by side, chatting very plea-

santly. He told her stories about her eyes: they were beautiful dark lakes, he said, where the thoughts swam about like enchanting mermaids. He told her about her brow: it was a proud range of snowy hills, he said, full of bright rooms and pictures; and he told her about the storks, and the sweet little children that they bring with them.

Oh, those were delicious stories! And then he made a set speech in well-ordered words, begging the beautiful princess to be his wife; and she at once said, "Yes."

"But you must come again on Saturday," added she; "at six, as the clock strikes, the king and queen take tea with me. They will certainly feel very much pleased to think of me having a messenger of the Prophet for a husband. But be sure you take care, my dear friend, to have some very pretty tale to amuse us with; for my parents are uncommonly fond of such things. My mother likes it very serious and grand; but my father always wants a merry one, and something that he can have a hearty laugh at."

"Yes, I will bring them a pretty tale, and that shall be my only wedding-gift," replied he, giving her a last embrace. Hereupon they took leave of each other; though before he went, the princess fastened a very rich sabre to his waist, the sheath

of which was set with fine pieces of gold; and fine pieces of gold were just what he most wanted.

With this he flew away, bought himself a new dressing-gown, and a few hours afterwards he was sitting in the wood, busy with making a pretty story against Saturday evening; and this he found not very easy to do.

After a good deal of thinking about this and that, he believed he should get through his task; and on Saturday, just as the clock struck six, this proved to be the case.

The king and queen, and all the court, were waiting tea in the princess's room. The strange suitor was received very politely.

"Perhaps you will tell us a story," said the queen, when tea was over; "do, pray; let it be a very serious and instructive one."

"No! one that we may have a hearty laugh over," said his majesty, in a tone of rebuke.

"Ay, to be sure I will," answered the stranger; and he began without hemming more than three times.

The Story.

"There was once a bundle of MATCHES, that could not contain themselves for pride, because they thought they were of such very high birth. The tree that was their forefather, that is to say,

the mighty fir, of which they each were a tiny little splinter, had in olden times been a great tall tree in one of the northern forests. But these matches were now lying beside a somewhat scanty kitchen fire, between a tinder-box and an old iron pot, to which they told most wonderful stories about their younger days. 'Yes, when we were on the green bough,' said they, 'then we really had a flourishing time of it! Every morning and evening we had diamond tea: this was the dew. All the day long we had sunshine, if the sun was out, and all the little birds had to amuse us with merry songs or touching stories. We could see plainly enough, too, that we were rich; for the leafy trees only put on a decent dress in summer; but even in the hardest winter our family was not without its beautiful green wardrobe, which neither frost nor storm could tear off. At last, in the midst of this happy kind of life, the wood-cutters came: this was the fearful revolution that split our family asunder. Our mighty father got a place as main-mast to a splendid ship, which could sail round the world when it chose; the other branches of our family went somewhere else; and *we* now have the wearisome, though certainly honourable, office of making a light for the common throng. It is for this reason we fashionable people are thrust aside into the dark kitchen.'

"'Well, I have had a different life of it,' began the IRON POT, near which the brimstone matches were lying. 'Since the very first moment I entered into the world, I have often been placed on the fire, and then scoured bright again. I look after the solids. My only pleasure is, in lying, nice and clean, on the shelf after dinner, and in having a sensible half-hour's chat with my fellow pots and pans; though, saving and excepting the WATER-CAN, which sometimes goes down into the yard, we live more retired here than in a cloister. Our only news-bearer is the MARKET-BASKET; but he makes such a chatter about the government and the people,—yes, it was only yesterday, I think, that an old pot fell down in sheer alarm, and broke in two.'

"'You talk too fast,' said the TINDER-BOX, putting in a word of warning; and FLINT and STEEL struck so hard against each other, that they sparkled, as if to say, 'What a merry evening we shall have of it!'

"'Let us talk about who is the grandest of us all,' said the MATCHES.

"'No, I am not fond of talking about myself,' replied the EARTHEN DISH; 'let us have an evening's amusement in common. I will make a beginning; and we will all tell things we have seen and gone through. In this way each can so

easily amuse himself by thinking what he would have done in the same situation; and this makes it so pleasant to listen.

"'Well, then, on the shores of the Baltic, beneath the shade of the Danish beech-woods'—

"'What a capital beginning,' cried all the PLATES at once; 'that will certainly be a story to our taste.'

"'Yes; there I passed my youth in a quiet family. All the furniture was so bright that you might have seen yourself in it; every morning the white deal floor, made of firm, hard wood, cleverly joined together, was washed quite clean, and regularly every fortnight clean curtains were put up.'

"'Dear me, how very interesting!' said the CARPET-BROOM, interrupting her. 'You might tell at once that it was a lady speaking, the whole thing has such an air of cleanliness about it.'

"Quite true, upon my word,' said the WATER-CAN, in a tone of protestation; and he leaped up so, for very joy, that there was a little rattle heard upon the ground.

"And the dish continued her tale; and the end of it by no means belied the promise of the beginning.

"All the PLATES were set rattling with delight; but the PARLOUR-BROOM fetched parsley from the dust-hole, and crowned the DISH—for he

knew this would vex the others; and 'if I crown her to-day,' thought he, 'she will crown me to-morrow.'

"'Now I will have a dance,' said the FIRE-TONGS; and away they danced: oh, what a sight, to be sure! It could throw one leg up into the air, almost as high, and far more gracefully than Mademoiselle Ellsler! The old CHAIR-COVER in the corner burst with laughter at the very sight of it.

"'Are not we to be crowned, too?' cried the FIRE-TONGS; and crowned they were.

"'Pooh, these are only the rabble!' thought the MATCHES.

"Now the TEA-URN was called on for a song. But she said she had a cold, and could only sing when she was boiling. But this was merely trying to be grand; for the fact was, she would not deign to sing till she found herself among the great folks in the drawing-room.

"In the window to the left lay an old stumpy PEN, which the cook used to write with. There was nothing very remarkable in her, except that she had been dipped too deep into the ink, on which she plumed herself very highly, and gave herself great airs.

"'If the TEA-URN will not sing,' said she, 'let her leave it alone. The nightingale in the cage outside is of a musical turn; to be sure she never

learned a note at school, but we will be particularly kind and indulgent this evening.'

"'No! I think it highly improper,' said the TEA-KETTLE, who was chief kitchen-singer and half-brother to the TEA-URN, 'to listen to a strange bird like that. Is that patriotic? I call upon the MARKET-BASKET, as an experienced man, to decide the matter.'

"'I am vexed, most heartily vexed,' said the MARKET-BASKET; 'is this the way to pass the evening? Would it not be much better to turn the house topsy-turvy? then each would get into his right place; and I would willingly lead off the quadrille. That would be something like fun for us.'

"'Yes; let us make a regular to-do,' cried they all with one voice.

"At this moment the door opened. It was the housemaid; and POT, PAN, BROOM, KETTLE, and TEA-URN, were still in a moment. Not one of them spoke another word. But there was not the smallest pot, nor the sorriest kitchen thing, that would not have been able to tell what wonders it could do, and how grand it was.

"'Yes, if I had chosen,' thought each of them, 'we should certainly have had a merry evening of it.'

"The housemaid took the matches, and made a

light with them. Oh, how they crackled and burned in the yellow-blue flame!

"'Now then,' thought they, 'every blockhead can see that we stand first; how brightly we shine, what a fine light we give!' and, so saying, they were burned to ashes."

"That was a capital story!" said the queen; "I quite felt myself in the kitchen beside the matches. Yes, indeed, now you *shall* have our daughter."

"Of course," said the king, with a well-pleased nod. "On Monday you shall have our daughter."

The wedding-day, therefore, was fixed; and on the evening before, the whole town was illuminated. It rained rusks and rolls on the joyous crowd, who eagerly snatched at them. The boys in the streets climbed up the trees, crying huzza! and whistling through their fingers. It was indeed a splendid sight.

"Well," said the merchant's son, "I think I must see if I can hit upon something to give still greater splendour to the festival." So he bought a great number of rockets, crackers, and all that was finest in the way of fireworks, put them in his box, and flew up with them into the air.

Off the fireworks went, with such a cracking and popping! All the Turks leaped for joy at the

enchanting sight, till their slippers were whistling about their ears. They had never before beheld such a scene in the air.

As soon as the merchant's son came down again into the wood with his box, he thought he would just take a walk in the town, to learn how his fireworks had looked. It was very natural indeed that he should think of this.

And what wonderful things the people told him! Every man he asked about it, had looked at it in his own particular way; but all thought it fine beyond compare.

"I saw the princess's husband himself," said one; "he had eyes like twinkling stars, and a beard like a foaming water-fall."

"He flew up in a fiery cloak," cried another; "the most beautiful little angels peeped out of the folds."

Such were the glorious things he heard from the lips of the excited people; and the next day was to be his wedding-day.

He now hurried back into the shady wood, in order to take his seat in his box—but, where was it gone to? The box was burnt! A spark from one of the fireworks had been carelessly left in it; the dry wood had caught fire, and the box lay in ashes. The poor disappointed lover could neither fly nor return to his bride any more.

All the next day she stood waiting for him upon the roof. She is waiting still, while he wanders about the world without a home, and tells his tales; but these, by the way, are not nearly such nice tales as that one about the brimstone matches.

THE

GARDEN OF PARADISE.

HERE lived, in days long gone by, a king's son, who had a greater number of pretty books than any one else in the world. All that had ever taken place he had learnt by reading, or had seen it done over again, so to speak, in beautiful pictures. About every country, and the people of every country too, it was very easy to teach him; but where the Garden of Paradise was to be found,—alas, there was not a word written about that; and this unknown place of joy, this promised land that he hoped so much to see, was just what he thought of most, and what he most dearly longed for.

When he was quite a little boy, and was just going to school for the first time, his grandmamma

had talked very much to him about this large beautiful Garden of Paradise, and had often told him that every flower there was the sweetest cake he could think of, and the light dust inside it the most delicious wine. On one flower history was written, on another geography or tables; in short, he need only eat cakes, she said (of course pieces of the proper size), and he would know whole lessons by heart; and the more he ate, the more he would learn of history, geography, and tables.

All this he used to believe at that time; but when he year after year grew older and older, learned more and became cleverer, he understood very well that there must be glorious things of quite another kind to be seen in the Garden of Paradise.

"Oh, why did Eve take from the tree of knowledge?" said he, with a sigh; "and why did Adam taste of the forbidden fruit? I should have been in his place, and then it certainly would not have happened, and sin would never have stolen so cunningly into the world."

This was what he then said, and this he said still, when he was seventeen years of age. All he thought of, or dreamed of, was the Garden of Paradise.

One day he was strolling in the wood. He was walking alone, for that was what he was fondest

of doing. Evening took him by surprise, with its strange and wonderful twilight: the clouds were piled up like mountains, one above the other; there came a heavy shower of rain, as if the sky were one shattered flood-gate, from which the water kept pouring and pouring; it was as dark as it is at night, at the bottom of the deepest well. Now his foot slipped in the wet grass, and now he stumbled over the sharp-pointed stones that made the way so rough over the rocky ground. Every thing was streaming with water, and the poor prince had not a dry thread left upon him. He had to scramble as well as he could over large blocks of stone, with the water gushing over him from the drenched moss as he bent down his head. He felt so faint that he was ready to fall; when, all at once, he heard a strange sound, as if something were hissing, and he saw before him a large lighted cave. In the middle of this there was such an immense fire burning, that you might have roasted a stag at it; and that was just what was being done. The noblest stag that ever was seen, with a stately pair of antlers, was fastened to a spit a yard long; this was fixed between two pine-trees, that had been cut down close to the roots; and the meat was being turned round very quickly before the fire. An old woman, so tall and strong that she looked more like a man in

disguise, was sitting close by, throwing one piece of wood on the fire after the other.

"Come nearer," she cried, after saying "How do you do?" "Sit down by me at the fire, and dry your clothes."

"But there is such a strong draught here," said the prince, in a fretful tone; and then he stretched his weary limbs on the ground.

"It will be much worse when my sons come home," answered the woman. "You are in the cave of the Winds, and my good sons are the four winds of the world. Can you understand that?"

"Where are your sons?" said the prince.

"Why, it is not easy to answer when any one asks such foolish random questions," replied the woman. "My sons are having good sport to-day: they are playing at ball with the clouds in the large hall up there." And so saying, she pointed, with a look full of meaning, into the air, where the winds and waters were fiercest in their uproar.

"Ah, indeed!" said the prince. "But I think you speak rather harshly; not near so gently as the ladies with whom I usually live."

"Yes," said the old woman; "I dare say they have nothing else to do. But I must be as firm as a rock, if I wish to make my boisterous boys behave themselves to me. This I can do, how-

ever, although they are so stiff-necked and contrary. Do you see those large bags that are hanging against the wall? My sons are just as much afraid of them as you, in earlier times, were of the rod behind the looking-glass. In fact, I will not allow the clamorous lads to get the upper hand of me. When they make too much noise and racket, I just take and wind them round my finger, and into the bags they march without more ado. There they stay, closely tied up, and do not come out again to bluster and swagger till their mother thinks fit. But, see, here comes one of them."

It was the North Wind who now entered the cave, attended by an icy coldness. Large hailstones bounded about as he moved, and leaped after him over the uneven ground, while snowflakes fell whirling around him. He wore a jacket and trousers of bears'-skin; a cap, made of the skin of the sea-dog, fell loosely over his ears. Long icicles hung down his bristly beard, and one hailstone after another came pattering down from the collar of his jerkin.

"Do not go all at once to the fire," said the prince, in a tone of warning. "The frost might easily seize on your hands and face."

"Frost!" replied the North Wind, bursting into a hearty laugh. "Frost! that is just the greatest treat you could give me. What foolish weakly

child of man are you? How, you little dwarf, did you get into our cave?"

"He is my guest," said the old woman; "and if this is not enough for you, you may march into your bag. Now you know what I mean, I hope."

Her words took effect; and the North Wind now told them which road he had taken last, and where he had been almost all that month.

"I am come from the polar sea," said he. "I have been with the Russian walrus-hunters, on the Island of Bears. I was sitting and sleeping at the helm when they sailed out from the north cape; and when I now and then awoke from my lazy doze, the affrighted storm-bird was fluttering saucily about my legs. What a droll bird that is! He makes a quick stroke with his wings, and then holding them quietly stretched out, he skims through the air as if he did not want them."

"Do not use too many words," said the gigantic Mother of the Winds, calling her son to order. "And so you arrived safely at the Island of Bears?"

"Yes, indeed; and a delicious place it is. It makes a dancing-floor as flat as a plate. Plains of half-thawed snow, sprinkled here and there with tufts of moss, sharp stones, and all sorts of skeletons of walruses and polar bears, lay strewed on the ground, row upon row. They looked like

the arms and legs of fallen warriors on some vast field of battle. You would think the sun had never shone upon them. I gave a puff at the mist from the corner of my mouth, that I might gain a glimpse of the ponderous hut which rests upon countless and endless colonnades. It was a house made of the motley fragments of wrecks, firmly fastened together, and so covered with walrus-leather, as to be both air-proof and water-proof. The flesh-side of the leather was turned outwards; and thus the walls looked like gleaming patchwork of red, green, and blue. On the top of the cupola, as if by way of ornament, a saucy bear sat growling. I hastened down the strand, took a peep at the birds' nests, and the little callow young that had but just broken the egg; and when they began chirping and opening their beaks so wide, I gave a gentle puff into their ten thousand throats at once, and they learned to keep their mouths shut. Far down in the fathomless depths of the sea walruses were rolling about like monstrous serpents, with swine's heads, and alabaster teeth."

"You tell a story well, my lad," said his mother, with a look of pleasure. "It makes my mouth water to listen to you."

"So now we went cheerily to work! The harpoon sped straight into the walrus's breast,

and the reeking blood gushed forth like a fountain over the ice. I will have my fun now, thought I; and then I gave some of my choicest morsels; I whistled them my newest bravuras, and I made my fastest sailers, the high rock-like icebergs, move forwards, one after the other, and hem in the boats, like iron nut-crackers playing with brittle nut-shells. Heigho, what a whistling and hallooing there was! but I drowned it all with my shrill song. They had to unload the ship of the dead walruses, chests, casks, and cordage on the trackless field of ice. I powdered them right and left with snow-flakes heavy as lead; and at last, after they had restored the sea the booty they had wrung from it, I sent them drifting southward in their shattered vessels to get a taste of salt water. Sure enough, they will never bend their course to the Island of Bears again."

"Then you did wrong there," said the Mother of the Winds, rebuking him.

"What good I did I leave others to tell," said he; "but here is my brave little brother, the West Wind coming. I like him the best of them all. He has always a sort of refreshing sea-smell about him, whilst his breath spreads a delightful coolness all round."

"Is that little Zephyr?" said the prince.

"Yes, to be sure, it is Zephyr," replied the elder brother; "but he is not such a tiny little fellow either. In the olden days of fable he was a wondrously beautiful boy; but those golden spring days are fled for ever."

The gigantic little fellow looked like a wild man of the woods. However, he had a roller on, that he might not hurt himself by falling. In his hand he held a club of mahogany-wood, that had been cut in the old forests of America.

"Where are you come from?" said his mother.

"From the romantic wood-covered deserts," said he, "where the thorny briers weave a fence from tree to tree, where the water-serpent slumbers in the dank sedge with her poisonous brood, and where man seems to be the most superfluous work of Nature's hands."

"What did you do there?"

"Oh, I watched the deep river with an eager eye; I saw how it tumbled from rock to rock, then changed to dust, and flew aloft to the clouds to bear up the rainbow! I saw the untameable buffalo swimming in the stream; he drifted along with a flight of wild fowl, that rose heavily on the wing, as soon as the foam of the fall besprinkled them. But the buffalo had to be hurried down below,—at least it pleased me in my wisdom to think so; and I blew up such a choice little storm,

that the time-olden trees, as if seized with giddiness, began to sail along and fly into shivers."

"And did you do nothing else?" asked the old woman.

"I have turned head over heels in the savannas; I have stroked the wild horse on the neck and ruffled his mane; and played a match with the monkeys at shaking down cocoa-nuts. Yes, indeed, I have such fine things to tell; but one must not babble all one knows at once. You can do that best, mother." And so saying he kissed his mother so heartily that she was almost falling backwards off her chair; for in all he did he was a wild impetuous little fellow.

At this moment the South Wind entered the cave, in the flowing mantle of a Bedouin.

"Cold enough outside here!" said he; and he threw fresh wood on to the fire; "it is easy enough to see that the North Wind is come home before me."

"Why, it is hot enough here to roast a polar bear," answered the North Wind.

"You are a polar bear yourself," replied his brother South Wind pettishly.

"Do you want to be poked into the bag?" said the old woman; "sit down upon that stone there, and give me a nice report of where you have been lately."

"In Africa, dear mother; I have been lion-hunting with the Hottentots in the land of the Cafirs. What fine grass grows there in the meadows! It is as fresh and green as an olive! There the gnu was dancing; and the ostrich, too, challenged me to a race; but I was nimbler on my feet than he. Then I went to the desert, where nothing was to be seen but dirty yellow sand; looking just like the bottom of the sea. I met a caravan; they were slaughtering their last camel for the sake of water to quench their thirst, but bitter enough was the little they got. The sun sent down his scorching rays from above, and the hot sand was glowing beneath them. There were no bounds to the far-stretching wilderness. What a delicious roll I gave myself in the fine loose sand, whirling it up in columns before me. Oh, what a dance that was! you should have seen how the poor dromedaries stood and trembled; and how the merchant, vainly bidding defiance to death, sought to screen his burning brow with the caftan. He threw himself down at my feet, as before Allah his God. Now they all lie buried; I generously built up a pyramid of sand as a grave-mound over them all. When I blow this away again, some day or other, the sun shall bleach their mouldering skeletons; and then travellers will be able to see, beyond all doubt,

that men have been on the spot before them. Otherwise, it would be hard to believe as much in the desert."

"So you have done nothing but evil," said his mother; "away with you into your bag!"

And before the South Wind guessed what she was at, she had seized him round the body, and tied him up in his elastic prison. The latter now rolled about the floor like a ball; but the old woman took her seat upon it; so Master South was obliged to be still.

"Those are merry boys of yours, my lady," said the prince.

"Ay, indeed they are," replied she; "and I can manage them too. Look, here is the fourth coming in."

It was the East Wind, dressed as a Chinese.

"What! you are come from your favourite corner?" said his mother; "I thought you had been in the Garden of Paradise."

"No; I am going thither to-morrow," said the East Wind. "It will be just a hundred years to-morrow since I was there. I am now come from China, where I danced a minuet round the Porcelain Tower till all the bells rung again. In the street below, the officers on duty got their stated allowance of stripes. I cannot tell you how many pounds of bamboo were used upon their shoulders;

and they were people from the first to the ninth degree. They screamed, till they were hoarse again, 'Many thanks, my fatherly corrector and benefactor.' But they meant nothing by all this; so I struck up a regular storm with the bells, and sung, Tsing, Tsang, Tsu!"

"You think a great deal too much of yourself, my boy," said the old woman, cutting short the talkative youth. "However, it is a good thing that you are going to the Garden of Paradise to-morrow; that will help you, perhaps, to a little more sense than you at present have."

"But why have you put my brother South in his bag?" said the East Wind. "Out with him. He must tell me about the bird phœnix; for the princess in the Garden of Paradise is always wanting to hear something new about the bird when I pay her my visit at the end of a hundred years. Undo the bag, and then I will call you my very dear mother, and I will give you two pockets-full of tea, fresh and green as I gathered it on the spot."

"Well, then, for the sake of the tea, and because you are my favourite, I will open the bag." She did so, and out crept the South Wind; but he looked quite crest-fallen, for he knew that the strange prince had been a witness of his well-merited punishment.

"Here is a palm-leaf for the princess," said the South Wind. "This was given to me by the old bird phœnix, the only one of his race in the world. He has scratched the whole story of his life upon it with his beak,—the wonderful history of a hun dred years, the course of which determines each division in the thick book of his life. Now, she may read it to her heart's content. I saw the bird phœnix set fire to his nest with a hot burning-glass, and sit and burn to death in the flames, like the widow of a Hindoo warrior. How the dry twigs crackled, and what a scent and perfume there was! At last, all ended in one bright flame. The old Phœnix was a mass of ashes; but his egg lay red-hot in the fire. It burst with a terrible report, and out flew the young bird, to be the ruler of the whole feathered brotherhood, and the only phœnix in the world. He pecked a hole in the palm-leaf which I have just handed you: that is his token of greeting to the prin cess."

"Let us have something now to stay our hungry stomachs," said the Mother of the Winds, bluntly interrupting him.

So they all sat down to eat, in which scene the roast venison took a leading part. The prince had chosen his place close to the East Wind, and the soon became good friends.

"Just tell me," began the prince, "what princess is this you have been talking so much about? And where is the Garden of Paradise?"

"Ha, ha!" said the East Wind, with a chuckling laugh. "If you want to go thither, take wing to-morrow with me. However, I must tell you, that no men have been there since the time of Adam and Eve, whom you have read of, I dare say, in your Bible."

"Yes, to be sure I have," answered the prince, who was fond of telling all he knew.

"It is true that, at the time of their being driven out, the Garden of Paradise was swallowed up by the yawning earth; still it kept its warm sunny glow, its kindly air, and, in fact, all the fulness of its beauty. The Queen of the Fairies lives there now; and there, too, is the Island of Happiness, which Death has never touched, and where it is so beautiful to build houses and cottages. Seat yourself on my back to-morrow, and I will take you with me: I think we shall travel very well together. But now cease your chatter awhile, for I must go to sleep."

And so one and all they went to sleep.

Early next morning the prince awoke, and he thought it more than commonly curious to find himself already far away above the clouds. He clung closer and closer to the East Wind's back,

who honourably did his part, and held him upright, keeping him out of the clutches of Giddiness, who flew after him like a tormenting demon, and watched the chance of some unguarded moment, when he might unseat the bold sailer through the air. They were so high up, that the woods and fields, rivers and lakes, seemed interwoven one with the other, as we see them on a large painted map of the world.

"Good morning!" whispered the East Wind. "You might well have slept a little longer, for on the flat land beneath us there is nothing cheering to the eye, unless you take a fancy to count the church-steeples. There they are, like little dots of chalk on the green board." By the 'green board,' he meant the fields and meadows.

"I fear it was very rude of me to leave as I did, without saying 'good bye' to your mother and brothers," said the prince.

"We need no excuse to be made for us when we are asleep," replied the East Wind.

And so saying, he dashed on faster than ever. You might have seen this by the tops of the trees on the mountains, whose leaves and branches rustled again as if their teeth were chattering whilst the travellers sped forwards at full gallop on their airy way. You might have seen this by looking at the sea and the lakes; for wherever they flew,

the waves rose higher, and the huge ships bowed them down in the shining waters, like stately swans.

Towards evening, when it was growing dark, the large towns were indeed strange to look at. The lights below were seen flashing first here and then there, like the nimble little Will-o'-the-Wisps. It was just what we see when we have burnt a piece of paper, and watch the little sparks moving about, which, merry-hearted children say, are the people going out of church. The prince clapped his hands for joy; but the East Wind civilly begged him not to be such a simpleton, but rather to hold fast, or he might easily tumble down upon the point of a church-steeple, and hang there like a butterfly on the pin of an insect-collector.

The eagle flew swiftly through the shady woods, but more swiftly flew the East Wind. The Cossack on his fiery steed glanced like lightning over the plain; but the prince was far quicker in overtaking him, as, with the rapidity of thought, he drove tirelessly forward on the back of the free-born Wind.

"Now you may see the Himmalaya," said the East Wind; "they are the highest mountains in Asia: and we shall soon be at the Garden of Paradise."

They turned their course more to the south, and

the air soon grew fragrant with spices and flowers. The fig and the pomegranate grew wild in the fields, and the vine bent beneath its gay clusters of blue and red grapes. Here they both descended, and stretched themselves at length on the yielding grass, where the flowers beckoned fondly to the Wind, as if to say, "Welcome to thee back again!"

"Are we now in the Garden of Paradise?" said the prince.

"No, indeed we are not," answered the East Wind; "but now we shall soon be there. Do you see the rocky wall before you, where the juicy vine-leaves spread their curtain of green? Through that must we pass. Wrap your mantle around you, for though the sun burns us here, yet the very next step we take we shall find it icy cold. The bird that flutters past the cavern has its outer wing in the warm air of summer, while its inner one feels all the cold of winter."

"Ah, then, this is the way to the Garden of Paradise?" said the prince, inquiringly.

They now entered the cavern. Oh, how savage was the tooth of the nipping frost! But it did not last long; for the East Wind spread wide his wings, and they shone like a brilliant flame. What dismal places were all around them! Large blocks of stone, from which the water trickled, drop after drop, with doleful regularity, rose in

arches of the most uncouth form over their heads. Sometimes the path was so narrow that they had to creep on their hands and feet, and sometimes as wide and ample as in the open air. It seemed as if there were nothing before them but grave-yard chapels, and mute ranges of organ-pipes that had long ceased to sound.

"We are wandering on the way of Death, I ween, to the Garden of Paradise," said the prince. But the East Wind, without answering a word, pointed directly forward, whence the most beautiful blue light shone upon them. The blocks of stone vanished one after another in mist, which at last became as clear as a white cloud in the moonlight. The air grew serene and mild,—as refreshing as upon the hills, and as sweetly-scented as among the roses of the valley. Then they came to a river, bright as the air itself, and swarming with fishes that shone like gold and silver. Eels, of a purple-red hue, scattering little blue sparks wherever they moved, were sporting in the flood; and the broad leaves of the wondrous water-lily had all the colours of the rainbow. The flower itself was a bright pink flame, which received the same nourishment from the watery element that the fatness of the oil supplies to the lamp. A marble bridge, of massive strength, yet as finely wrought as if woven of lace and pearls, led across

the water to the Island of Happiness, where the Garden of Paradise lay cradled in bloom.

The East Wind took the prince in his arms, and carried him over. Then the birds and the flowers sang beautiful songs to him about his childhood, with voices sweeter than all the voices of men. "Are they real palm-trees, or gigantic water-plants," thought the prince, "that are growing here?" Never before had he seen such sturdy trees, nor branches that shot up so high in the air. There were strange creeping plants there too, that wreathed themselves into garlands, just like those we see painted in gold and bright colours on the margins of good old books, or like those which twine themselves around the first letters of the chapters; so strangely mixed up together were the birds, the flowers, and the twisted wreaths. In the grass close by stood a flock of peacocks with their brilliant tails spread out. "These," thought the prince, "must really be what they seem to be." But no; the moment he touched them, he found that they were not birds, but flowery plants of a peculiar kind; in fact, they were only weeds, which in this lovely garden were a thousand times as beautiful as the real flowers elsewhere,—more beautiful, indeed, than the finest peacocks when they spread their bright tails of blue, green, and gold. The lion

and tiger bounded over the green hedges as nimbly as cats; tame they were as is the little lamb that the child goes to play with; while the hedges smelled as sweetly as the blossom of the olive. The ring-dove, glittering like the brightest pearl, fanned the lion with her wings; and he, in his turn, shook his silken mane, as if to thank her for her kindness. Even the antelopes, that are wont to be so shy, stood quietly looking on, as if they were waiting to take part in the sport.

Now the Fairy of Paradise drew near. Her clothing shone like the sun; and her face looked gentle as that of a happy mother when she smiles on the infant that slumbers on her arm. She was young and beautiful; and the loveliest girls, each with a bright star in her hair, composed her train.

The East Wind handed her the leaf which the phœnix had written on, and her eyes sparkled with delight at the sight of it. She took the prince by the hand, and led him into the palace, the walls of which were coloured like the most beautiful tulip when held to the sun. The ceiling itself was one large beaming flower, and the longer the eye gazed on it, the deeper seemed the hollow of its cup.

The prince stepped to the window, and cast a glance of curiosity through one of its thousand panes: then he saw the well-known Tree of

Knowledge, with the watchful serpent, and Adam and Eve standing close beside it.

"Were they not driven away from here?" said he, in his innocence. But the fairy smiled, and explained to him that time had thus carved their images on every pane, but not in the way they seemed to be printed there. No; it was real life. The leaves on the trees moved; the man and woman went and came, as if they were going to and fro on the smooth surface of a looking-glass. Then he looked through another pane, and there he saw Jacob's dream, with the ladder reaching up to heaven, and the angels floating up and down on their large wings. Yes, every thing that ever had happened in the world lived and moved on the panes of glass. Nothing but time could form such clever pictures.

A smile of the greatest good-nature mantled like a roseate gleam over the features of the fairy as she led him into a high saloon, without beginning or end, the walls of which seemed to be made of portraits so bright and clear that you could see through them, every one of which vied with the other in beauty. They were millions of happy creatures, who smiled and sang, so that their voices seemed to mingle in one pure strain of melody. The uppermost of all looked as small as the tenderest rose-bud, when it is drawn like a

little bright dot upon paper. And in the middle of the saloon rose a grand tall tree, with thick drooping branches. Golden apples, some small and some larger, hung under the dark-green leaves. It was the Tree of Knowledge, whose fruit Adam and Eve had tasted. Dew of a ruby-red trickled from every leaf. The tree appeared to the young prince to be weeping tears of blood.

"Now let us get into the boat," said the fairy; "on the heaving waters we will refresh ourselves. The boat floats for ever towards the point which, by the never-failing magnet of spotless virtue, it has been enabled to find; but for this very reason it never stirs from where it now is. All the countries of the world glide before us, in a circle that has not an end."

And truly wonderful was it to see how the whole shore gradually put itself in motion, and how all the people upon it at once began their march. There the high snow-covered mountains strutted proudly on, bearing up the clouds on their dark forests of pine. The horn wound its solemn and pensive note, and the shepherd carolled with the lark in the vale below. Now the sturdy banana-trees lowered their wreathed branches over the boat, as if yearning to embrace it; whilst swans black as the raven emerged from the foam, and animals of the most grotesque form,

and flowers of every different sort, were seen on the strand. It was the fifth part of the world, New Holland, which passed in review before them, affording a beautiful prospect of the blue mountains in the distance. The hymns of the heathen priests were heard, and the cannibals were seen dancing their boisterous dance to the sound of drums, timbrels, and the hoarse note of the trumpet of bone. The pyramids of Egypt, twin-brothers with the clouds, with a heap of pillars and sphinxes half buried in sand, sailed past in continual variety. The northern lights burned on their right and on their left, shooting sometimes across the arch of heaven beyond the little star of the pole. No one could make fireworks equal to that. How happy the prince felt! beyond all doubt he saw a hundred times as much as we are able to tell of.

"And may I remain here for ever?" he asked.

"That rests entirely with yourself," answered the fairy. "If you do not yield to the temptation of doing what is forbidden, you may remain here for ever."

"Oh, I certainly will not raise a single finger to the apples on the Tree of Knowledge!" cried the prince, with earnestness; "there are a thousand other fruits as beautiful as they are."

"Ask your own self; and if you are not strong

enough, go back with the East Wind who brought you. He is now about to return, and he will not be here again for a hundred years. Truly this space of time will seem to you as if it were but a hundred hours, but a long long time is it to fight with temptation and sin. When I leave you in the evening, I must say, 'Follow me, my beloved;' I must beckon to you with my hand; but remember to stay where you are. Go not with me, I charge you; for with every step you take, your longing will grow stronger. You will press forward to the saloon where the tree of knowledge grows. I sleep beneath its fragrant boughs, and, like wreathed bells of the purest crystal, they cradle me in beautiful sounds. You will bend over me, and I must smile; but if in your hardihood you imprint a kiss on my lip, your paradise will be lost to you in the depths of the earth. The sharp wind of the desert will whistle round you; the cold rain will flow down in streamlets from your hair: woe, misery, and despair will be your portion."

"I will remain here," said the prince, with a keen resolve.

The East Wind kissed his brow, and whispered to him, "Be brave, and in a hundred years we shall meet again; farewell, farewell!"

And the Wind spread forth his mighty wings;

and they cast a gleam all round like that of the noiseless lightning in autumn, or of the northern lights in some hard frosty winter.

"Farewell, farewell!" resounded from the trees and the flowers, till echo could repeat the words no more. Storks and pelicans formed a train, like a long fluttering streamer, as they escorted him to the boundary of the garden.

"Now we begin our dances," said the fairy; "at the end of them, just as the sun is setting, you will see me beckon to you; you will hear me call you to follow me. But beware of doing so; no, shut your eyes then, and stop your ears. Unfortunately, I must repeat this every evening for a hundred years; but then every time the evening comes round again you will have gained more manliness of heart, and at last you will not think any thing of it. To-day is the first time; and at least I have given you a friendly warning."

The fairy led him into a spacious hall, full of bright white lilies; the yellow downy threads in the cup of each flower formed a little golden harp, which breathed the soft music of the flute. Beautiful girls in flowing attire swept airily past him in the fleet changes of the dance, singing in poetic transport the joys of existence; rejoicing that they would never die, and that the Garden of Paradise would bloom for ever.

The sun sank in the west. The whole arch of heaven took a golden tint, which gave the lily the soft flush of the bashful rose. The prince drank of the sparkling wine, which the lovely girls handed to him, and felt a happiness that he had never known before. With astonishment he suddenly beheld the background of the hall recede, and the Tree of Knowledge stood before him in dazzling splendour. From this moment the song became soft and winning as the voice of his mother, and to him it seemed to say, "My child, my darling child!"

Then the fairy beckoned, and tenderly she cried, "Follow me." And he rushed madly towards her, forgetting, on that very first evening, all she had said, and breaking his vow in a moment, because she beckoned to him and smiled. Now the sweet perfume grew stronger around him; the little harps sounded more melodiously than before; and it seemed as if the millions of smiling heads in the saloon where the tree grew were prettily nodding, and saying to him, "All ought to be known; man is the lord of the earth!" And they were no longer drops of blood that fell from the leaves of the Tree of Knowledge; they were red sparkling stars, as it seemed to him.

"Follow me, follow me, my beloved," faltered the beautiful syren; and with every step he took

his youthful cheek grew warmer, and his blood more rapid in its flow.

"I must," cried he, with a groan; "surely there is no sin in it,—there cannot be. Why should I not follow the step of beauty and delight? I will only look at her while she sleeps: I can lose nothing by that, if I beware of kissing her. But there is no fear of that, after all; for I am strong at heart, and my will is firm."

And the fairy threw off her glittering robe, gently drew aside the branches, and in a moment she was hidden from his view.

"I have not sinned yet," thought he, "neither will I." With treacherous reasoning such as this he drew the boughs aside, and there she already lay slumbering, charmingly lovely, as only the fairy in the Garden of Paradise could be. She smiled in her dreams: he bent him over her, and saw her eyelids glistening with tears.

"Weepest thou for my sake?" he whispered; "weep not, my peerless one. At this moment I at last learn what is the happiness of paradise." He stooped and kissed the tears from her eye—his lip rested upon hers.

Then there came a clap of thunder more terrible and deafening than had ever been heard before. The hall lay in ruins; the blooming paradise, with the beautiful fairy, began to sink; it sank

deeper and deeper, lower and lower, till at last it glimmered only like a pale little star or sickly glow-worm in the measureless distance. The prince quivered in every limb, and trembled with a deadly chill; he closed his eyes, and lay a long time as if lifeless.

The cold rain beat upon his pallid face, the wind blew keenly on his head, till gradually consciousness returned. "What have I done?" said he, with a sigh. "Sinned, have I, as Adam sinned, so that my paradise is lost and buried?" And he opened his eyes: still, indeed, he saw the star on the grey horizon,—the star which glittered brightly as a lost paradise, though partly shrouded in a mourning veil,—but it was the morning star in heaven.

He rose, and found himself in the wood, close by the cave of the Winds; and beside him sat the Mother of the Winds, looking very angry, and raising her arm with a threatening gesture.

"What, the very first evening!" she cried. "Ah, I thought as much. If you were my son, I tell you, you would have to go without a word more into your bag."

"Patience, grandam, so he shall; they shall all be put up in time," said a gaunt thin form, stepping up. It was an old man, with a scythe in his hand, and large wings like a bat; it was

Death. "He shall be packed up in the coffin, but not just to-day. I will only put my mark upon him for the present, and then send him to wander a while in the world, where he may repent of his sin, and become a better man. I shall be sure to be with him one day: when he least expects it, I shall put him into his coffin, place him on my head, and fly up to that star with him. There, too, the Garden of Paradise is in bloom; and if he be good and pious, he shall one day enter it; but if his thoughts be evil, and his heart still full of sin, then he will sink deeper in his coffin than paradise ever sank."

THE

POOR MATCH-GIRL.

IT was New Year's Eve, and a cold snowy evening. On this night a poor little girl walked along the street with naked feet, benumbed with cold, and carrying in her hand a bundle of matches, which she had been trying all day to sell, but in vain; no one had given her a single penny. The snow fell fast upon her pretty yellow hair and her bare neck; but she did not mind that. She looked wistfully at the bright lights which shone from every window as she passed along; she could smell the nice roast goose, and she longed to taste it: it was New Year's Eve!

Wearied and faint, she laid herself down in a corner of the street, and drew her little legs under her to keep herself warm. She could not go home, for her father would scold her for not having sold any matches; and even if she were there, she would still be cold, for the house was but poorly protected, and the wind whistled through many a chink in the roof and walls. She thought she would try and warm her cold fingers by lighting one of the matches: she drew one out, struck it against the wall, and immediately a bright clear flame streamed from it, like a little candle.

The little girl looked at the flame, and she saw before her a beautiful brass stove with a nice warm fire in it! She stretched out her feet to warm them—when, lo, the match went out; in a moment the stove and fire vanished, she sat again in the cold night, with the burnt match in her hand.

She struck another: the flame blazed on the opposite wall, and she saw through it into a room where a table was laid out with handsome dishes, —roast goose, and other nice things were there, —and, what was still more extraordinary, she saw the goose jump from the dish, knife, and fork, and all, and come running towards her. But again the match went out; and nothing but the dark wall and the cold street was to be seen.

The little girl drew another match; and as

soon as it struck a light, she saw a most beautiful Christmas tree, much larger and more splendid than any she had ever seen before. A vast number of lighted candles hung among the branches; and a multitude of pretty variegated pictures, like those in the shops, met her eyes. The girl lifted up her little hands in rapture at the sight; but again the match fell; and in the same moment one of the blazing candles shot through the sky, like a falling star, and fell at her feet. "Now some one dies," cried she; for she had been told by her good old grandmother, that when a star falls, a soul returns to God.

Again she struck; and, behold, a bright light shone round about her, and in the midst of it stood her kind grandmother, and looked calmly and smilingly upon her.

"Dear grandmother," said she, "take me, oh, take me! You will be gone from me when the match goes out, like the bright stove, the nice supper, and the Christmas tree;" and saying this, she struck all the rest of the matches at once, which made a light around her almost like day. And now the good grandmother smiled still more sweetly upon her; she lifted her up in her arms, and they soared together, far, far away, where there was no longer any cold, or hunger, or pain: —they were in Paradise!

But the poor little match-girl was still in the corner of the street, in the cold New Year's morning. She was frozen to death, and a bundle of burnt matches lay beside her. People said, "She has been trying to warm herself, poor thing!" But ah, they knew not what glorious things she had seen; they knew not into what joys she had entered—nor how happy she was on this festival of the New Year!

THE RED SHOES.

THERE was once a pretty little girl who was so poor that she always had to go bare-footed in summer, and in winter to wear large wooden shoes; so that her little feet grew quite red, and that looked very dangerous.

In the middle of the village lived the shoemaker's old mother. She set herself to work, and cobbled up a little pair of shoes, as well as she could, out of old strips of red cloth. They were clumsy things, to be sure; but what she did was kindly meant, and these shoes the little girl was to have. The little girl's name was Karen.

On the very day her mother was buried, the red

shoes were given her; and she then put them on for the first time. Certainly they were not the sort of things for mourning, but then she had no others; and so she put them on her naked feet, and walked behind the coffin.

Then on a sudden a fine large carriage drew up, and in it sat a tall old lady. She looked at the little girl, and felt a compassion for her; so she said to the clergyman, "Give me the little girl, good sir; and I will be kind, and take care of her."

Karen thought this was all on account of the red shoes; but the old lady said they were horribly ugly, and had them burned. Karen, however, was dressed in neat clean clothes, and was taught to read and to sew. People said she was pretty; but the looking-glass said, "You are more than pretty, Karen; you are beautiful."

Soon after this, the queen of the country came on a journey that way with her little daughter. The little girl was a princess; the people flocked to the palace, and Karen was one of them. The little princess stood at the window in fine white clothes, and let them all stare at her. She had neither a long train nor a crown of gold, but then she had beautiful red morocco shoes on; they were certainly much handsomer than those which the shoemaker's mother had stitched together for

little Karen. After all, what is there in the world that can equal red shoes?

At length Karen was old enough to be confirmed by the bishop. She had new clothes given her, and she was to have new shoes too. The rich shoemaker in the town took the measure of her foot; this he did at home in his own shop, where there stood large glass cases full of pretty shoes and shining boots. It was a nice sight indeed; but the old lady could not see clearly, and so she had no pleasure in looking at them.

Now among the shoes was a pair of red ones, just like those which the princess had worn. How pretty they were! besides, the shoemaker told her they had been made for the child of a countess, but had not fitted.

The shoes were tried; they fitted Karen, and were bought; but the old lady knew nothing about their being red; for she never would have allowed Karen to go to the church in red shoes. However it happened so.

All the people looked at her feet; and as she passed through the church up the choir, it seemed to her as if even the old figures on the monuments fixed their eyes on her red shoes; and these were all she thought of when the bishop laid his hand on her head, and spoke of the holy rite of baptism and of her covenant with God. And the

organ played so solemnly; the clear voices of the choristers were heard singing, too: but Karen thought of nothing but her red shoes.

In the afternoon every one told the old lady that her shoes were red; and the old lady said they were ugly things, then, and that it was not at all proper to wear them; and that, for the future, when Karen went to church, she should go in black shoes, even if they were old ones.

The next Sunday Karen was to go to the Communion. She looked at her black shoes, and then at her red ones; she looked at each pair over again;—and then put on the red ones.

It was a beautiful sunshiny day. Karen and the old lady went along the footpath through the corn-fields; and it was rather dusty there.

At the church-door stood a disabled old soldier with a pair of crutches, and a wonderfully long beard, which was more red than white,—for indeed it was red. He made a very low bow, and asked the old lady if he should wipe the dust off her shoes. She said he might; and Karen put out her little foot too. "Look, what beautiful dancing-shoes!" said the old soldier; "sit tight, when ye dance!" and so saying, he gave the soles a good slap.

The old lady gave him a piece of money, and then went into the church with Karen.

All the people in the church looked at Karen's

red shoes, and all the old figures on the monuments seemed to fix their eyes upon them. And when Karen kneeled at the altar, she thought of nothing but her shoes; she forgot the beautiful words which the priest said; she even forgot her prayers.

At last all the people went out of church, and the old lady got into her carriage. Karen was just raising her foot to get in too, when the old soldier called out, "Look, what beautiful dancing-shoes!" and Karen could not help herself, but was obliged to try a step or two; and when she had once begun, her legs kept on dancing; it was just as if the shoes had a sort of power over her. She went dancing round the corner of the church,—she could not stop herself; so the coachman was obliged to run after her, lay fast hold of her, and lift her into the carriage. But still the feet kept on dancing so, that they gave the good old lady many a kick. At last they got her shoes off, and then her legs were at rest.

When they reached the house, the shoes were put into a cupboard; but Karen could not keep from looking at them.

Soon after this, the old lady lay ill in bed; the doctors said she would not recover. She had to be nursed and waited on, and no one was more bound to do this than Karen. But there was a

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large ball to be given in the town, and Karen had been invited. She looked at the old lady, she felt that she could not recover; she looked at the red shoes, and she thought there could be no sin in going. She would just put on the red shoes; surely there could be no harm in that: but then; —she went to the ball, and began to dance.

Now whenever she wanted to go to the right, the shoes went to the left; and when she wanted to dance up the room, the shoes took her down the room, and down the stairs, along the streets, and out of the gate of the town. On they went, dancing and dancing, till they brought her to a large dark forest.

There she saw a flash of light between the trees, and she thought it was the moon, for it was like a man's face; and, true enough, it was a man's face, for there sat the old soldier with his long red beard, nodding, and saying, "Look, what beautiful dancing-shoes!"

She started in dismay, and would have shaken off the red shoes, but they stuck fast; she tore off her stockings as far as she could, but the shoes had grown fast to her feet. So she was forced to go on, dancing and dancing, over field and meadow, in rain and sunshine, by night and by day; but in the night-time it was most dismal of all.

She danced up to the churchyard, but the dead

did not dance there; they had something much better to do than to dance. She tried to sit down upon the poor man's grave, where the bitter tansy grows, but there was no rest for her limbs; and as she turned towards the open door of the church, she saw an angel standing there, in long white raiment, with wings that reached from his shoulders to the ground. His face was stern and severe; and in his hand he held a broad and shining sword.

"On shall you dance," said he; "on shall you dance, in your red shoes, till you turn pale and cold,—till you shrink up to a skeleton! You shall dance on from door to door, and you shall knock at the houses where proud high-minded children live, that they may hear you, and tremble. You shall dance!"

"Mercy!" cried Karen. But she did not hear what the angel replied; for the shoes carried her away across the country, over highway and by-way, and still she went dancing on.

One morning she danced past a door that she knew very well. Inside the house she heard the funeral song; and a coffin, bedecked with flowers, was brought out. From this she knew that the old lady was dead; and now she felt herself forsaken by every one, and condemned by the angel of God.

Still she went on dancing and dancing, and was forced to dance on even in the darkness of the night-time. The shoes carried her along over the stumps and thorns, and they scratched her till the blood came: she danced away over the heath to a little lonely house. There she knew the executioner lived; and she tapped at the window, and said, "Come out, come out; for I cannot go into your house; I must dance."

"You do not know who I am, I think," said he. "I cut off the heads of wicked people; and now I know there is work for me, for my axe rings."

"Do not cut off my head," said Karen, "for then I shall not be able to repent of my sins; but cut off my feet and the red shoes."

And then she went on, and confessed all her sinfulness; and the executioner cut off her feet and the red shoes; and the red shoes went dancing off across the country, into the depths of the forest. After this the executioner made her wooden feet, and a pair of crutches; and taught her the psalm that sinners always sing. She then kissed the hand that had held the axe, and went her way across the heath.

"Now I have suffered enough for the red shoes," said she. "Now I will go to church, that they all may see me." So saying, she moved

on briskly towards the church-door; but when she reached it, the red shoes were dancing before her, and she started with fright, and turned away.

All that week she was very sad, and wept many a flood of bitter tears; but when Sunday came, she said, "Well now, I am sure I have suffered and struggled enough; I dare say I am just as good as many of those people who sit in the church there, and think so much of themselves." So she set off more boldly than before; but she only got as far as the churchyard-gate, when she saw the red shoes dancing along before her, and she started again for fright; she turned back, and now heartily repented of her sinfulness and pride.

So she went at once to the parsonage, and begged to be sent to service: she said she would be industrious, and do all she could. She did not care for wages, she said, so much as for having a home, and being with good people. The good priest had pity on her, and recommended her to a kind lady, who took her into her service. Karen became industrious and thoughtful. All the children were very fond of her; but when they began to talk of finery and beauty, she used to shake her head.

The next Sunday they all went to church, and they asked her if she would go with them; but with tears in her eyes she looked sorrowfully at

her crutches. So the others went to church; but Karen went alone to her little room. It was only large enough for a bed and a chair to stand in it, and there she sat down with her prayer-book before her; and as she read in it with a pious mind, the organ-notes in the church were wafted to her on the wind; and she raised her tearful eyes, and said, "O God, help me!"

Then came a clear ray of sunshine, and before her stood the angel of God, in snow-white raiment: the same he was whom she had seen at the church-door on that dreadful night. But instead of the flaming sword, he held a beautiful green branch, with clusters of roses, in his hand. With this he touched the ceiling, and it rose up on high, and where he touched it, there shone a golden star; he touched the walls, and they stretched themselves out: then she saw the organ that was playing; she saw the carved figures of the saints; and all the congregation stood around her and sang. The church had come to the poor girl in her little room, or rather she had been carried to *it*. There she was beside the rest of the family; and when they looked up after the singing was over, they nodded, and said, "It was right of you to come, Karen."

"It was God's grace," said she.

And the organ sounded, and the voices of the

choristers blended softly and sweetly with it. The bright sun shone warmly through the window upon Karen, till her heart grew so full of sunshine, peace, and joy, that it broke. On a sunbeam her soul fled upward to God, and there was no mention made in heaven of the RED SHOES.

THE

WICKED KING.

IN old times there lived a wicked, proud-hearted king, who thought of nothing else but conquering all the lands in the world, and making his name a terror to every one. He hurried about with fire and sword; his soldiers trampled down the corn in the fields, and burned the houses of the peasants, so that the red flame seemed to lick the leaves off the trees, and the fruit hung roasted from the black and scorched boughs. Many a poor mother hid herself, with her little naked baby, behind the smoking walls, and the soldiers searched for them till they found both herself and

her child, and then began their cruel joy. Wicked spirits could not have done more shocking things than they did; but the king thought this was just as it should be.

Day by day his power increased; his name became a terror to every one, and fortune favoured him in all that he did. He brought home large heaps of gold and treasure from the cities that he conquered; and in his own royal city such wealth was stored up as never was seen in any other place. Now he had splendid castles and palaces built; and every one who saw these glorious things said, "What a great king!" They never thought of the distress he had brought upon other countries; they never heard the sighs and groans that rose from the towns which he had laid in ashes.

The king gazed on his gold, and on his gorgeous palaces; and then, like many other people, he thought, "What a great king am I! but I must have still more, much more. No power must be called equal to, much less greater than mine!" So he began at once to make war upon all his neighbours, and he conquered them all. He had the vanquished princes fastened to his chariot by chains of gold when he drove through the streets; and when he sat at table, they had to lie at his feet, and at the feet of his courtiers, and pick up the crumbs that were thrown to them.

Now the king had his image set up in the public squares and royal palaces: yes, he even wanted it to stand in the churches before the altar of the Lord; but the priests said, "O king, thou art great, but God is greater: we dare not do this."

"Well, then," said the wicked king, "I will overcome Him also!"

And in the pride and folly of his heart, he had a beautiful ship built, which could sail through the air. It was as gay in colour as the tail of the peacock, and seemed furnished with a thousand eyes; but every eye was the muzzle of a gun-barrel. The king sat in the middle of the ship; then he had only to press a spring, and thousands of balls would fly out, while the guns were found loaded again, just as they had been before. Hundreds of mighty eagles were harnessed to the ship: and so, now that all was ready, he flew up towards the sun. The earth soon lay far down below him. At first, with its mountains and its woods, it looked like a ploughed field, where the green blades of grass peep out from among the broken clods of turf; then it was like a smooth map of the world, and soon after this it was hidden in mist and cloud. Higher and higher flew the eagles.

But, behold, God sent a single one from His countless host of angels, and the king shot thou-

sands of balls at him; but the hard balls rebounded like hail from the angel's shining wings. One drop of blood only, one single drop, came trickling from his snow-white plumes. This drop fell upon the ship in which the king was sitting: it burnt itself into it, and weighing down the vessel like a thousand fothers of lead, it bore it with awful violence towards the earth. The strong wings of the eagles were broken; the wind whistled round the head of the king; and the clouds around him, which were made of the smoke of the burnt cities, took the threatening form of griffins, many miles long, that stretched out their strong claws at him; or now they looked like rolling rocks and dragons vomiting fire. The king lay half dead at the bottom of the ship, which was caught, at last, in the thick branches of the forest.

"I will conquer heaven," said he. "I have sworn that I will, and it shall be done."

So for the next seven years he had ships cleverly built for sailing through the air; he had flashes of lightning forged from the hardest steel; for he was bent on riving the bulwarks of heaven. From all the countries he ruled over, large armies were levied, which covered a circuit of several miles when they were drawn up man by man. They embarked in the ship she had so cunningly contrived, and he himself drew near to the one which

he was to sail in. It was then that God sent a swarm of gnats against him, — one little swarm of gnats. They buzzed round the king, and stung him on his face and hands. He drew his sword in anger, but he only fought the empty air, for he could not touch the gnats. Therefore he ordered silken robes to be brought: he bade them wind these around him, that not a gnat should be able to reach him with its sting; and they did as he commanded.

But one little gnat lighted on the inside of the robes: it crept into the king's ear, and stung him there. The wound burned like fire; the poison rose to his brain. He tore off the silken coverings, and dashed them from him; then, rending his clothes, he danced naked and mad before the rude wild soldiers; while they, in their turn, jeered at the mad and wicked king, who had thought of fighting with God, and who yet had been overcome by one single little gnat.

THE

EMPEROR'S NIGHTINGALE.

THE Emperor of China, you know, is a Chinese, and all the people about him are Chinese. It is indeed a great many years since the wonderful things which I am going to tell came to pass; but for this very reason they ought to be heard, lest they be too soon forgotten. The emperor's palace was rightly called the most splendid palace in the world. From top to bottom it was built of the finest porcelain,—costly ware indeed, but so very brittle, that you were always obliged to take great care what you

were about. The most wonderful flowers grew in the garden, and to the most beautiful of these little silver bells were fastened, which made the sweetest of sounds; so that no one could go by without duly admiring these curiously formed plants. Indeed, every thing in the emperor's garden was strangely tricked out, and the place itself reached so far on all sides, that not even the gardener knew exactly where it ended.

However, by going on and on in a straight line, you at last came to a beautiful wood, full of high trees and deep lakes. This wood, with its fresh green verge, formed the fringe, as it were, of a shore that you could not see the end of, and on which the blue, the bottomless sea threw up its snow-white foam. Large ships could sail up close under the branches of the trees; and in their leafy shade lived a nightingale, with so wondrously sweet a note, that even the poor fisherman, who, in the celestial empire, dare scarcely lose a minute if he would secure his scanty livelihood, was used to stay his boat for a moment or two, and listen in tranquil delight when the nightingale began her song.

"How beautiful! how very beautiful!" he would often cry. But he dare not enjoy the sweet music long; for his hard work had to be done, his nets to be hauled in; and over the toils

of the day he soon forgot the night-bird of the grove. Yet the next night, when the nightingale sang again, and the fisherman came in his usual way to the spot, he would again exclaim, "How beautiful! how very beautiful!"

From every country that is ruled by an emperor or a king, people flocked in numbers to the chief city of China, and with astonishment did they behold the palace and the garden, and all the wonderful things around them. But when they came to hear the nightingale, they all said with one voice, "The Chinese bird of enchantment is the best, after all."

When these travellers reached their homes again, they told what they had seen and heard, and the learned men among them wrote many thick books about the city, the palace, and the garden; and so far from forgetting the nightingale, she was placed above every thing; and those who could write poetry strung a host of clever rhymes together in praise of the feathered songstress in the wood by the sea.

By degrees these books and writings were spread about the world, and by chance one of them fell into the hands of the Emperor of China. The ruler of the "Celestial Empire" sat reading on his throne of gold. He read on and on, and every two or three seconds he gave a quick nod

with his head; for he felt an extraordinary pleasure in feasting his gracious eyes on the magnificent descriptions and pompous sketches of the city, the palace, and the garden.

"But the nightingale is the best of all!" These words were found in many places in the book.

"What can this mean?" said the emperor; "the nightingale! I know nothing at all about her. Is there really such a bird in my empire, and more than all, in my garden? Was I not to hear of this till I read of it?"

So saying, he ordered his lord high chamberlain to appear before him. This was a very grand personage, who, when any one of inferior rank ventured to accost him, or to ask him for any thing, had only to answer "Pah!" and that is as good as nothing at all.

"We have a most remarkable bird in our neighbourhood, called a nightingale," began the emperor, gravely. "They say the little thing is the greatest rarity in my boundless empire. Why have I been told nothing at all about it?"

"May it please your gracious majesty," returned the chamberlain, "I have never heard talk of such a creature. At all events," added he, in more courtly form, "such a person has never been presented at court."

"It is my will that he appear before me this

evening, and sing," said the emperor. "What, the whole world is to know what I have, and I not know it myself!"

"I never heard the name before, I assure your majesty," said the chamberlain again, with one of his lowest bows; "but I will look for the individual till I find him."

But where was the melodious bird to be found? The chamberlain ran down stairs and up stairs, through saloons and galleries; and not one of the people whom he found in the rooms had ever heard the nightingale mentioned. So he returned to the emperor, and said it certainly must be one of those many fables which are so often found in books.

"Your gracious majesty must not believe all that is printed or written," said he, touching the ground with his forehead. "It is a mere made-up story; or it is something like what they call the magic art."

"Pooh!" said the emperor; "the book in which I read it was sent me by his high mightiness the Emperor of Japan; so there can be no untruth in it. In short, I *will* hear the nightingale. She must be here this very evening; for I am willing to confer upon her the utmost of my favour. And, now mind, if she does not appear in my palace in time, the whole court shall receive

a good bastinado on their empty stomachs at the hour of supper."

"Tsing-za!" cried the chamberlain, with a groan; and he rushed up stairs again, and down stairs again, through saloons and galleries, with half the court at his heels; for the good folks would fain have spared themselves the slaps that were to be given them on their empty stomachs. Then there was a searching and asking about the remarkable bird, which was known to all the rest of the world, but not to a single person at the imperial court.

At length, when they reached the kitchen, they stumbled upon a poor little girl, the daughter of one of the under-cooks. "Oh, dear me; the nightingale?" said she; "yes, I know her very well. Oh, how she sings! Every evening I have leave to carry some of the broken victuals home to my sick mother, who lives below on the sea-shore, and then when I come back faint and tired, and sit down to rest in the wood, I hear the sweet nightingale singing. The tears rush into my eyes at the sound;—yes, I just feel as if my dear mother were kissing me."

"Little girl," said the chamberlain, "I will get you a good place in the kitchen, besides leave to see the Emperor dine, if you will take us to the nightingale, for she is invited here this evening."

And so they set off in a bevy for the wood where the nightingale was wont to sing. To make a shrewd guess, half the court must have been of the party.

Scarcely were they half-way to the spot, when a cow began to low.

"Ho, ho!" said a page; "now we have her! It certainly shews a monstrous deal of strength in such a tiny little creature; hush, hark! though I really think I have heard these sounds somewhere before!"

"Yes, to be sure, that is the lowing of the cows," said the little kitchen-maid; "we are a long way yet from the place."

The frogs now began croaking in the pond.

"Delicious, truly delicious!" said the Chinese high-steward; "that is the famous singer, I can hear her; it sounds just like the ringing of church-bells, only in a smaller way."

"No, no, those are the frogs," said the little kitchen-maid, setting him right; "but now we shall soon hear her, I think."

Just at this moment, after a brief interval of rest, the nightingale warbled one of her long sweet trill-lil-lills.

"That is her," said the little girl, as she pointed with her finger to a little bird of an ash-grey colour on a tree. "Hark, hark! Look, there she sits!"

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THE EMPEROR'S NIGHTINGALE.

"Is it possible!" said the chamberlain; "I never should have thought she would look like this! How simple she seems! she has no doubt changed colour at seeing so many grand people before her."

"Little nightingale," cried the little kitchen-maid quite loud, "our most gracious Emperor wishes so very much that you would come and sing to him."

"With the greatest of pleasure," replied the nightingale; and she sang so sweetly, that it was quite a treat to hear her.

"It is just, upon my honour," said the chamberlain, "as if little glass bells were being shaken one against the other. And how her little throat tries itself! I really cannot make out why we never heard her before; she will certainly make her fortune at court."

"Shall I sing the Emperor any thing else?" said the nightingale, thinking that the Emperor was with them.

"My enchanting little lady," said the chamberlain, "I have the flattering commission to invite you this evening to a gala at court, where you will enrapture his gracious imperial majesty with your charming song."

"It sounds much best in the green woods," said the nightingale. However, she willingly went

with them, as she heard that the Emperor wished her to do so.

There had been a great deal of cleaning and adorning in the palace. The walls and floors, which were of porcelain, more or less transparent, were lit up with many thousand gold lamps of the gayest dye, whose reflection, as it vanished in the distance, formed a star-bespangled milky way. The most beautiful flowers, with the most tuneful voices, stood in rows in the antechambers. There was a great deal of draught from the running to and fro; but this made the bells doubly melodious; and you could scarcely hear yourself speak. In the middle of the large saloon in which the Emperor was seated, a little gold perch had been set up, upon which the nightingale was to take her post of honour. The whole court was present, and even the little kitchen-maid obtained leave to take her stand behind the door; as she now enjoyed the title of a real cook to the court. All were in full dress, and all gazed eagerly on the meek little grey bird, to which the Emperor now gave a most gracious nod.

And the nightingale sang with such a melting sweetness, that the bright tears stood in the Emperor's eyes, and now they went coursing down his cheeks; and the nightingale sang still more sweetly, still more enchantingly. Did it touch

his heart, I wonder? Yes, the Emperor was in such an ecstacy of delight, that he said the nightingale should wear his gold slipper round her neck.

The nightingale, however, thanked him very humbly, but begged to decline so great an honour, as she had already received sufficient recompense, she said, for her trifling services. "I have seen tears," continued she, "in the Emperor's eyes; and I value them more than every thing beside. A monarch's tears have a wonderful virtue in them. Oh, yes, of themselves they are reward enough!" And now she again sang in her sweet enchanting tone.

"It is the most amiable and complaisant little thing I ever saw," said the ladies, one after the other, as they formed a circle round the bird. And so saying, they took water in their mouths, and clucked away famously when they were spoken to; and then they thought they were nightingales too. What will not woman's vanity do, especially when aided by the imagination? Even the footmen and waiting-women were pleased to say that they were satisfied; which was really saying a great deal, for to suit their whims and fancies must have been the hardest task of all. In short, the nightingale was wonderfully successful.

It was now decided that she should remain all

her life long at court, have a cage to herself, and the liberty of walking out twice in the day, and once in the night-time. However, she was to have twelve servants with her at such times, each of whom was to hold her fast by a silken thread that was neatly twisted round her tender little leg. There was really little pleasure enough in such an airing, for it was more like the forced parade of some poor prisoner of state on the ramparts of a fortress than any thing else.

In the meanwhile, the whole town, with its hundreds and thousands of tongues, were talking of the wonderful bird that was born among them, and yet had remained so long unknown to them. And when the people met in the street of an evening, the one would say to the other, "Night!" and the other would answer, "In!" and they would understand what was meant without hearing the "Gale!" Nay, eleven little Chinese porkmen, or at least porkmen's children, boys and girls, were named after the feathered songstress at the very moment of their birth, and yet not one of them could sing.

Now, one day, a large parcel came directed to the Emperor, with these words upon it, "The Nightingale."

"Here, I will venture to say, we have a new book about our famous bird," said the Emperor.

But it was no book; it was a valuable little toy, that played of itself, and had been carefully packed in a box. It was a nightingale made by art, exactly like a living one, except that it was stuck full of diamonds, rubies, and sapphires, which almost weighed it to the ground. As soon as this curious bird was wound up like a clock, she could warble or trill one of the pieces which the real nightingale sang; and then her tail popped up and down, glittering with gold and silver. Round her neck hung a little purple riband, with the following words in the ornate style of those countries embroidered in it: "The nightingale of the Emperor of Japan is a poor thing compared to that of the Emperor of China."

"How beautiful!" said all the ladies and gentlemen; and the person who had brought the new bird received letters patent in confirmation of his title of "High Imperial Purveyor of Nightingales."

"Now they must sing together," said the courtiers; "oh, what a duet we shall have!"

And this was tried. But it would not do; for the real nightingale sang in her own manner, and the false bird turned and screwed out her notes by means of metal springs and rollers; so that the ear of a good judge could easily have distinguished the light creaking of the clock-work

inside. But then the reader must please to remember that these people were only Chinese; and besides this, the leader of the orchestra assured them that the noble lady in the box played in capital tune, and quite after his school.

After this, the new bird had to sing alone; and she succeeded quite as well as the real one. But then what a good address she had, and in what splendour did she come! She shone and glittered all over with diadems, bracelets, and egrets. She warbled the same piece three-and-thirty times, just as if her notes were set one after the other in one fixed order, and yet she never was tired. The court would gladly have heard her song all over again; but the Emperor thought that the living nightingale should now sing a little, by way of change. But where had she got to in the meantime? No one had noticed her snatch the chance of a lucky moment, and fly away out of window to her own green woods.

"What does that mean?" said the Emperor, in a grumbling voice, when he heard of the self-willed flight of the little grey lady. All the courtiers were loud in their censures, calling the nightingale a most ungrateful creature, such as never had deserved to bask in the sunshine of the Emperor's favour.

"We have the best bird still," said they; and

again the sham bird had to sing her tune. It was now the four-and-thirtieth time that this able warbler, after being taken out of the box, had sung them the self-same piece; and yet she had never got to the end of it, for it was so difficult. The chief musician praised the bird above measure; nay, he even protested, on the honour of an artist, that she was much better than that little grey lady, the real nightingale he meant, and not merely so on account of her dress, and the beautiful diamonds she wore, but in respect of her intrinsic worth.

"For look, ladies and gentlemen," said he, "and his majesty above all; with the real bird we can never reckon exactly how her song is moulded, how it begins, how it goes on, and how it ends. But with the other bird every thing is fixed and regular. We can give a strict account of it, or, in case of need, it may be taken to pieces, and the inquiring eye may then see how the barrels are arranged, and how the springs act; in short, they follow each other according to definite principles, as clearly and faultlessly as the steps in a well-worked sum."

"So we think too!" cried they all; and the chief musician was allowed to shew the bird publicly next day to the people; for the good Emperor said, "Why should not I for once give my

poor subjects the treat, as it will put me to no further expense?" And they heard the diamond bird sing, and were just as full of glee as if they had drunk themselves merry over their tea; for that is a thorough Chinese fashion; and they all cried "O!" and each raised that finger that they call "lick-dish" in the air, and then they began nodding and nodding. But the poor fisher who had heard the real nightingale in the wood shook his head, and whispered very low, "Why, that sounds pretty enough, to be sure, and is rather like the real thing; but still there is something wrong about it, I don't exactly know what!"

The real nightingale was now banished for ever from the imperial states; but so far from troubling her head about her sentence of banishment, she remained quietly in her woody retreat.

The sham bird, however, kept her place on a silken cushion, close to the Emperor's bed. All the presents she had received in jewels and gold lay spread out around her; and her title was raised to that of "High Imperial Dessert Singer," though she now ranked as "No. 1 on the left side;" for the Emperor thought that side on which the heart was the grandest to stand upon; and even an emperor wears his heart on the left. The manful leader of the orchestra wrote five-and-twenty volumes about the clever bird. They were

so learned, so long, and so full of the very hardest Chinese words, that the people at once said they had read and understood them; or else they must have been stupid, and the penalty on the crime of stupidity was bastinado on a full stomach.

Thus things went on for a whole year. His majesty, the court, and the rest of the Chinese knew every little shake and quaver in the diamond lady's song by heart, and for this very reason the obliging and ready bird was quite to their liking. Yes, now they could sing in concert, and this they often did with the proper notes before them. The boys in the street trilled their "Pipipi! Cluck, cluck, cluck!" and the Emperor sang the same song, although in another key. It *was* a treat to hear them!

But one evening, while the sham bird was singing her very best, and the Emperor listening to her in bed, there was suddenly a "sch-r-r-rup" inside: something had given way. All the wheels went whirring round—sur-r-r-r-r, and it was all over with the music.

The Emperor sprang in haste from his bed, and sent for his physician; but of what use was a doctor? Then they ran off to the watchmaker to the court, who, after a good deal of palaver, and hemming, and hawing, and examining, at last set the works in some measure right again. How-

ever, he cautioned his imperial master to be very sparing in future of the singer; for, from frequent use, the screws were very much worn away, and it was impossible to put in new ones without disordering the music altogether. This disaster was the cause of great sorrow to the court: the High Imperial Dessert Singer was put on half-pay, for he could only be allowed to sing once a-year, and then not without great difficulty and danger. But at this season the able leader of the orchestra made a set speech, full of the long words he was so fond of, and clearly proved that, in regard to vocal ingenuity, no comparison injurious to the fame of the bird could be made between now and formerly. So, after all, she was just as good as she had ever been.

Five years had now flown by, when the whole land was suddenly distressed by an alarming piece of news. For all his subjects clung with loyal affection to their imperial master, by whose death they could gain nothing, while they might lose a great deal by the new claimant of the throne. The truth was, that the old Emperor was grievously ill; and, to all appearance, would shortly die. A new emperor had already been chosen: a countless crowd of people, in motley confusion, filled the streets of the metropolis, but more especially the large fore-court of the palace.

While the poor anxious chamberlain was almost at his wits' end, and his brow fairly reeked with agony, they beset him on all sides with the never-ending question, "How is the Emperor?"

"Pa!" said he, and shrugged his shoulders.

There lay the Emperor, in his gorgeous bed, all cold and pale. The whole court thought he was dead; and every one made the best haste he could to do dutiful homage to his fortunate successor. The footmen ran out to chat over the matter outside, and the maid-servants in the palace had a large coffee-party. In the galleries and saloons all round, the chamberlain had had cloth laid down, that not a footstep might be heard; and this made it doubly still. But the old Emperor had life in him yet, although he lay so stiff and pale in his costly bed, with its long velvet curtains and heavy gold tassels. A window high up in the room was open, and the moon seemed to shine with a feeling of pity on the Emperor and the ingenious bird.

Now the poor Emperor could scarcely fetch his breath. It was just as if there were something seated on his breast. He raised his weary eyelids, and saw, with a shudder, that it was Death, who had made his throne there; whilst on his naked and sightless skull he had placed the golden crown, holding in one hand the imperial sceptre,

and in the other his gorgeous escutcheon. From the folds of the large velvet curtains around him a host of strange faces peeped out, some of them thoroughly ugly, and others lovely and pleasant: these were all the good and evil deeds of the Emperor, which, now that Death was sitting on his heart, sent their searching looks through it with inexorable severity.

"Do you remember?" whispered one. "Do you remember?" shrieked another. And then, one after the other, they recounted so much to him that the cold sweat broke out upon his brow.

"That I never knew of," groaned the tortured Emperor of China. "Music, music! The great drum!" he cried out in a voice of despair, "that I may not be forced to hear all that these pert phantoms bore me with."

But still they went on, and every time any thing new was said, Death nodded his head just like a Chinese.

"Music, music!" cried the Emperor. "Little beautiful diamond bird, oh, sing now, do sing to me! I have given thee gold and jewels, and with my own hand hung my gold slipper round thy neck,—so sing for me,—oh, sing!"

But the bird stood motionless, for there was no one there to wind her up, and without that she

could not sing at all. In the meanwhile Death sat gloating on the Emperor with his large hollow eye-pits, and all was so still, so fearfully still.

But hark! The most lovely singing is heard at the window. It is the little living nightingale, who is sitting outside on the spray. She has heard of her Emperor's distress, and is come to sing him comfort and relief.

And now, as she sang, the spectral forms grew more vague and pale. The once-ebbing blood now flowed cheerily and more cheerily through the feeble limbs of the sufferer; even Death himself listened with admiration, and kept calling out, "Go on, little nightingale, go on."

"Yes, so I will, if you will give me the beautiful sceptre; so I will, if you will give me the gorgeous escutcheon, and the Emperor's crown."

And Death gave away every jewel for a song: but still the nightingale was not mute. Louder she sang, and with still more melting sweetness, of the peaceful churchyard where the roses grew, where the elder-tuft shed its fragrance on the air, and the fresh grass was wet with the tears of the mourners. Then Death began to feel so powerful a yearning towards his garden, that he floated out of the window like a cold white mist.

"Thanks, thanks to thee," cried the Emperor, now breathing again with ease. "Thou heavenly

little bird, I know thee well. Fool that I was, I drove thee from my dominions, and yet hast thou charmed away those fearful phantoms from my bed, and scared away death from my heart. How *shall* I reward thee?"

"I have already been rewarded beyond my desert," returned the nightingale. "The first time I sang, I brought the tears into my Emperor's eyes: that I shall never forget. Oh, those are the jewels, above all others, that cheer a singer's heart. But now go to sleep, and be well again; in the mean while I will trill thee a song."

The sun was shining on him through the chequered window-panes when he awoke, refreshed and strong. Not one of his servants had returned as yet, for they thought that he was dead; but the nightingale sat tirelessly by him, and sang.

"You must remain with me for good," said the Emperor. "You shall only sing when you like, and that diamond bird I will break into a thousand pieces."

"No; do not do that," said the nightingale. "She has done as well as she could; keep her by you as before. Besides, I cannot live at the palace; but just let me come when I like. Then I will perch of an evening upon the spray near the window there, and warble a free sweet song, that shall gladden your heart, and yet make you

thoughtful. I will sing to you about the happy, and about those, too, who suffer, and yet bear their misery with patience; I will sing to you of the good and the evil, which too often remain utterly hidden from you. Your little singing bird takes long flights sometimes: she goes to the poor fisher's cottage, to the peasant's hut,—to every thing that is far away from you and your court. I love your heart much more than your crown, though certainly the crown has a kind of sacred halo about it. Then remember, I will come to you from time to time, and I will sing you what you like. But one thing you must promise me."

"What you will," cried the Emperor; and then he stood in the gorgeous imperial robes in which he had arrayed himself, pressing to his heart the golden sceptre, as a further token that he would keep his vow.

"One thing I have to beg of you," said the nightingale; "do not let any body know that you have a little grey bird who comes and tells you every thing. This will make things still better." And so saying, the nightingale flew away.

At last the servants appeared to see about their dead master; yes, there they stood. But the Emperor said, "Good morning!"

THE

LITTLE PAIR OF LOVERS.

THE WHIPPING-TOP and the BALL lay together in a drawer, among a number of toys.

"Ought we not to make a little pair of lovers," said the WHIPPING-TOP to the BALL, "as we are lying in the same drawer together?"

But the BALL, which was a morocco one, and which thought as much of itself as a fine little lady, would not give any answer.

The next day the little boy came, to whom all the toys belonged. He painted the WHIPPING-TOP of a pretty red and yellow, and drove a brass nail, with a nice smooth head, into the centre of it. Then it was beautiful, indeed, to see the WHIPPING-TOP

go whirring and spinning on the even ground, with the swiftness of a whirlwind.

"Do, pray, look at me now," said he, proudly, to the BALL; "might not *we* become a pair of lovers, like a thousand others are? We suit each other so very well; you leap, and I dance: no one could be happier than we two might be."

"What are you dreaming of?" said the fine little lady, in a snappish tone. "Perhaps you do not know that my father and mother were a pair of real morocco slippers, and that I myself have a piece of Spanish cork in my body."

"Yes; but I am made of mahogany," replied the WHIPPING-TOP. "The town-clerk turned me himself, for he has a lathe of his own; and the task gave him a great deal of pleasure."

"Ay; but can I be sure of this?" said the BALL, in a tone of mistrust.

"May I never be whipped again, if I am telling a story," returned the WHIPPING-TOP, with some warmth.

"You are certainly a very clever talker," said the BALL, "but yet I cannot say 'Yes;' for I am almost as good as engaged, and to such a dear little swallow too! Every time I mount up in the air, he puts his head out of his nest, and whispers, 'Will you?' And now I am inwardly resolved to have him, which, at all events, is

almost as good as being engaged. In the mean while, I promise you that you shall never be forgotten by me."

"Yes, a great deal of use that is to me," said the WHIPPING-TOP, grumbling; and then they left off talking.

Some days after this the BALL was fetched from the drawer. The WHIPPING-TOP was astonished to see her dart up, like a brisk little bird, and soar so high in the air that the eye could scarcely reach her at last; and then she would soon come down again from the upper regions, and make a high bound when she touched the earth. But all this arose either because she pined for the swallow, or because she had the piece of Spanish cork in her body. The ninth time of so doing, she never came down again. The boy looked and looked for her; but she was gone!

"I know very well where the sweet creature is," said the WHIPPING-TOP, with a sigh; "she is in the swallow's nest, and has been married to the swallow."

And the more the TOP thought about it, the more violent became his yearnings towards the fugitive BALL. For the very reason that he could not obtain the object of his love, the consuming fire within him grew doubly strong. The mar-

riage of the BALL with another gave fresh interest to the adventure, and lent, as it always does, a new spur to passion. Just as he before had done, the WHIPPING-TOP went whirring round; but, do what he would, his thoughts were always upon the BALL, who, whether he were watching or dreaming, appeared anon to him in a more beautiful light.

In this way many years flew by; and by little and little his love of course became an old one.

Neither was the WHIPPING-TOP very young at last. So one day he was gilt all over: neither he nor any body else had ever seen him in so splendid a dress. He was now a gold WHIPPING-TOP; and when he spun, he sometimes gave such a leap that he whistled again. I wonder now how he got on with his dancing. Ah, that is hard to say. One day, however, he jumped up so high, that he was gone!

Where was he? who can guess?

He had tumbled by accident into the dust-hole, where there were all sorts of useless things that people had done with, lying peaceably together: old cabbage-stalks, potato-peels, lettuce-leaves, dusters, sweepings, and all the sand and mortar that had fallen from the roof down the water-pipe.

"Well, here I am, in a pretty plight," said he,

raising his voice aloud; "here I may soon get rid of my gilding. And what a sorry set am I fallen amongst!" cried he, as he cast a side-glance on an old naked cabbage-stalk, that scarcely seemed ashamed of its nasty yellowness. After this, his eye fell on a round little thing, that was more like a rotten, shrivelled apple, than any thing else. However, instead of being an apple, it was an old ragged ball, that had been thoroughly soddened by lying for years in the gutter, and which had at last been washed down from the roof, together with some broken tiles.

"Oh, what a treat," said the BALL, "to have one of one's own kindred to talk to!" And she cast a look of amazement at the gilded WHIPPING-TOP. "I am, properly speaking, made of morocco leather," began the little lady at last, who had now lost some of her fine ways; "I was sewn together by soft little hands, and I have a real Spanish cork in my body. But I fear no one would believe this to look at me now. I was just upon the point of holding my wedding with a swallow, when I suddenly fell into the gutter on the roof, where, alas! I lay for five whole years, without any thing either to cheer or to shelter me, exposed to the storm and rain, while the best days of my youth were on the wing. Believe me, I never dreamed in my cradle of such a hard fate as this!"

The WHIPPING-TOP said nothing in return. He thought of his former love; and the more he heard, the more convinced he became that it could be no one else but her.

Just at this moment the cook came to empty the dust-hole. "Ho! well, upon my word, here is Rudolph's golden WHIPPING-TOP!" cried she.

And the WHIPPING-TOP was again taken to the room, to be held in honour as before. But nothing more was heard of the BALL; for even the WHIPPING-TOP never spoke of his olden love. Ah, love is apt to die away altogether, when either intended bride or bridegroom has lain for five whole years, exposed to storm and misfortune, in the dirty wet gutter! Yes, we no longer know the object of our warmest regard, when we meet with it by chance in the dust-hole!

THE FIR-TREE.

A PRETTY little fir-tree once stood in the forest. It had a capital place, which was open to the sunshine and the air; and around it grew many of its taller brothers, both fir-trees and pines. But nothing had such value in the eyes of the little fir-tree as the growing to be tall. It never thought of the warm sun and the fresh air; it never troubled its head about the peasant children that went chattering along when they were looking for strawberries and raspberries. They often came with a whole jar full, or with strawberries that they had threaded on a straw; and then they would sit down beside the fir-tree, and say, "Oh, what a

pretty little thing it is!" And this the tree could not bear to hear.

In the following year it was a full shoot taller, and the next year it had gained another; for you can always see how old the fir-trees are by the number of joints below the leader.

"Oh, would that I were a tall tree like the rest of them," said the little fir, with a sigh; "then I should be able to stretch my branches out so far, and lift up my head so high as to take a survey of the wide world around me. Then the birds would build nests in my branches; and when the wind blew, I should bow just as grandly as the rest of them."

The poor tree had no delight in the sunshine, the birds, and the red clouds that sailed over it morning and evening. In the winter-time, when the glittering snow covered every thing, a hare would often come bounding up, and leap straight over the little tree;—oh, how vexatious that was! But now two more winters were over, and the fir-tree had grown so tall that the hare was obliged to run round it. "To grow, to grow, to be old and tall,—oh, that is all that is worth living for in this world!" thought the tree.

In the autumn, wood-cutters came and felled some of the largest trees. This happened every year; and the young fir, which had grown to a

good height by this time, began to shudder at the sight; for the tall stately trees fell crackling and crushing to the earth; their boughs were hewn away; they looked so naked, lank, and spare, that you would scarcely have known them; and after this they were put upon drays, and horses dragged them out of the wood.

Where could they be going to? What, I wonder, was to befall them?

In the spring-time, when the storks and swallows came, the little fir-tree said to them, "Do you know where they were taken to? Did you meet them on the way?"

The swallows knew nothing about it; but the stork looked very grave, and nodding her head, she answered, "Ay, I can believe it. I met a great number of ships as I flew hither from Egypt; on these ships there were stately masts; and I will be bound they were they, for they had the smell of firs about them. I can often speak to them: they look so bright and so proud."

"Oh, if I were but tall enough to sail across the sea! Now tell me, what is the sea, and what is it like?"

"Ah, that is a very long story," said the stork, and then she flew away.

"Have joy of thy youth," said the sunbeams;

"have joy of thy healthy limbs, and the young life that is in them."

And the wind kissed the tree, and the dew shed tears over it; but none of this did the fir-tree understand.

When Christmas drew near, quite young trees were cut down—trees that were neither so tall nor so old as this fretful fir-tree, that could never rest in peace, but was always wishing to be off. These young trees, and they were the very finest of all, were always laid on wagons with all their branches on, and horses drew them away out of the wood.

"Where can they be going to?" said the fir-tree. "They are not larger than I am; indeed, there was one that was much smaller; why do they leave all their branches on them? And whither can they be taking them?"

"We know, we know," chirruped the sparrows. "We have been peeping in at the windows in the town below; we know where they are going to. Oh, they are going to see the most beautiful sights you can think of! We peeped in at the windows, and saw them planted straight upright in the middle of nice warm rooms, and tricked out with such fine things,—gilt apples, gingerbread nuts, pretty toys, and hundreds of candles."

"And then?" said the fir-tree, while he trembled in every green limb, "and what takes place then?"

"Why, we did not see any more; but it was such a splendid sight!"

"I wonder if it will be my lot to travel the same bright path," shouted the joyful fir-tree. "That is better than sailing across the sea. How I long to be among them! If it were but Christmas! Now I am tall, and my branches well spread, like those that were carried away last year. Oh, to think of being in the wagon; and then to be in the warm room, with all those fine things hanging on me; and then, too—ah, there must be something still better after all that, or else why should they deck me out so? There must be something still grander, still more beautiful afterwards. But what can it be? Oh, how I long to know!"

"Rejoice in our love," said the light air and the sunshine; "rejoice in thy youth here abroad."

But the little fir-tree would not rejoice. It grew taller and taller; winter and summer it was green. The people who saw it said, "That is a beautiful tree;" and at Christmas-time it was cut down the first of all. The axe cut through to the marrow, the tree fell to the earth with a sigh. It felt a pain and a faintness—it could not

think of being happy then; it seemed so sad to part from home — from the spot where it had shot up so fairly. It knew it would never see its dear old companions again, the little bushes and flowers around it, perhaps not even the birds. The journey on the wagon had nothing comfortable about it.

The little fir-tree did not come properly to itself till, after being taken out of the cart with other trees, it heard a man say, "This one here is a beautiful one; this will do."

Now two finely dressed servants came out, and carried the tree into a large and beautiful drawing-room. The walls all round were hung with pictures; and beside the large porcelain stove stood fine Chinese vases, with lions embossed on their lids. There were rocking-chairs, silken sofas, large tables covered with picture-books, and a hundred times a hundred pounds worth of toys; at least so said the children. And the fir-tree was placed in a large tub filled with sand; but no one could see that it was a tub, for it was hung all round with green twigs, and was standing on a gay chequered carpet. Oh, how the tree trembled with expectation! What *was* going to happen? Both the servants and the ladies were busy in ornamenting it. On one twig they hung little nets, cut out of coloured paper; every one

of these nets was filled with sugar-plums. They stuck gilt apples and walnuts upon it, so that they looked as if they had grown there; and above a hundred red, blue, and white little candles were fastened to its branches. Dolls, too, the very picture of life, such as the tree had never seen before, were entwined with the green; and at the very top of all shone a spangled gold star so beautifully, so very beautifully!

"This evening," they cried, "this evening what a light there will be!"

"Oh, if it were but evening!" thought the tree; "if they would but make haste and light the candles! And then, I wonder, what is to happen? Will trees come out of the wood to look at me? Will the sparrows, I wonder, flutter against the window-panes? Shall I grow here, winter and summer, as gaily dressed as I am now?"

Ah, it knew what it would do; but it had a bark-ache for very longing: and bark-ache to a tree is as bad as the head-ache to the rest of us.

Now the candles were lighted. How bright, how beautiful it was! The tree trembled in all its branches, so that one of the green twigs caught fire, and was singed.

"Oh, dear me!" cried the ladies; and they put it out in a moment.

Now the tree dared not even tremble. Oh,

how frightened it was lest it should lose any of its finery! It was quite transported with all those splendid things.

But, behold, the folding-doors were thrown open, and a troop of children rushed in, as if they would have knocked the tree down! The older people followed them quietly: the children stood quite speechless with delight; and then shouted till the walls rung again, and danced round the tree, and plucked one present off after the other.

"What are they about?" thought the tree. "What is to be done now?"

The lights burned down to the branches, and, as they became so low, they were put out; and then the children had leave to plunder the tree. They rushed wildly at it, till all its branches cracked again; and if it had not been fastened to the ceiling by the gold star at the top of it, it must certainly have been thrown down. The children danced about with their beautiful toys. No one thought about the tree, except the old nurse, who came and peeped among the branches, to see if a fig or apple had not been forgotten.

"A story, a story!" cried the children; and they dragged a stout little man to the tree. He seated himself under it. "For now we are well shaded," said he, "and the tree may learn some-

thing by listening. But I will only tell one story. Will you have that about Ivede Avede? or that about Clumpy Dumpy, who fell down stairs, and yet afterwards rose in the world, and married the princess?"

"Ivede Avede!" shouted some; "Clumpy Dumpy!" cried others.

There was such a shouting and hallooing. But the fir-tree was quite silent, and it thought to itself, "Am I not to have any thing to do with it? am I not to play my part?" For it had shared their sport, and had really done what it could.

So the man told the story about Clumpy Dumpy, who fell down stairs, and yet rose again in the world, and married the princess. And the children clapped their hands, and cried, "Oh, tell on, tell on!"

They wanted to hear the story of Ivede Avede, too; but they only got that about Clumpy Dumpy. The fir-tree stood there quite mute and thoughtful; the birds in the wood had never told him any thing like that.

"What! Clumpy Dumpy fell down stairs, and yet gained the princess! Yes, to be sure, that is the way of the world," thought the fir-tree, and really believed it was true, because such a nice man had told it. "Ha, ha! who knows? per-

haps I may fall down stairs and win a princess!" And it enjoyed the thought of being tricked out next day with candles and toys and gilded fruit.

"To-morrow I will not tremble," it thought; "I will thoroughly enjoy all my splendour. To-morrow I shall hear the story of Clumpy Dumpy again, and perhaps that of Ivede Avede too;" and the whole night long the tree stood quite still and thoughtful.

In the morning the footman and the house-maid came in.

"Now my fine dress is going to be put on again," thought the tree; but they dragged it out of the room, up the stairs, to the garret-floor, and there they placed it in a dark corner where the daylight never shone.

"What can this mean?" thought the tree; "what am I to do here? what shall I hear here, I wonder?" and it leaned against the wall and kept thinking and thinking. Time enough it had to do so, for days and nights passed, and yet no one came near it; and when at last some one did come, it was only to put some large boxes in the corner. The tree was perfectly hidden, we may almost think it was quite forgotten.

"It must be winter now," thought the tree; "the earth is hard and covered with snow, men cannot plant me; so most likely I am to stay here

under shelter till the spring comes. How well-advised that is! how good men are! Though I wish it were not quite so dark and dismal here; there is not even a little hare to be seen. How pretty every thing used to look in the wood, when the snow was on the ground, and the hare came bounding past me, nay, even leaped over me; though then I did not like her to do so. It is dreadfully dull up here."

"Pip, pip," said a little mouse; he popped out of his hole, and another little one came after him. They snuffed at the fir-tree, and then slipped between its branches.

"It is terribly cold," said the little mice, "or else it would be nice living here, would it not, you old fir-tree?"

"I am not at all old," said the fir-tree, "there are many who are much older than I am."

"Where did you come from?" said the mice, "and what have you to tell us?" They were such inquisitive little creatures. "Tell us about the prettiest place on earth," said they; "have you ever been there? Have you ever been in the pantry where cheese lies on the shelves, and hams are hanging from the ceiling; where you can dance upon tallow-candles,—go in lean, and come out fat?"

"I know nothing about all that," said the tree;

"but I know the wood very well, where the sun shines, and the little birds sing." And then it told them all about its youth. The little mice had never heard any thing like it before; they listened so attentively, and at last they said, "Oh, what a deal you have seen, and how happy you have been!"

"I!" cried the fir-tree with a sigh; then he thought over all that he had been telling them. Ah, after all, they were merry times! And then he told them about Christmas Eve, and how he had been bedecked with cakes and candles.

"Oh, dear me!" said the little mice, "how happy you have been, you old fir-tree!".

"I am not at all old," said the tree; "it was this very winter that I came from the wood. I am in the very prime of life, only I am a little tall for my age."

"How nicely you tell a story!" said the little mice; and the next night they brought four other little mice to hear the tree tell its story. And the longer the poor fir-tree went on talking, the better it remembered the past. "They were indeed merry times," it said to itself; "but they may come again, perhaps, — they may come again. Clumpy Dumpy fell down stairs, and yet married the princess; and so I perhaps may gain a princess." And then the fir-tree thought of a pretty

little birch-tree that grew in the wood, and that really seemed a beautiful princess in its eyes.

"Who is Clumpy Dumpy?" said the little mice. So the fir-tree told them the whole story; he could recollect every word of it; and the little mice were so overjoyed that they were ready to leap to the top of the tree. On the following night many more mice came, and one night two rats also: but they did not think the story a pretty one; and this grieved the little mice, for now they thought less of it too.

"Do you only know this one story?" asked the rats.

"Only this one," answered the tree. "I heard it on the happiest evening of my life; but at that time I did not know how happy I was."

"Well, it is a miserable story," said the rats. "Do you know none about bacon and tallow-candles,—no regular pantry story?"

"No," said the tree.

"Then, good luck to you," replied the rats; and so saying they went back to their friends.

At last the little mice stayed away too; and the tree said with a sigh, "How pretty it was, though, when they were sitting all round me, those nimble little mice, and listening to my story! Ah, that is all over now! But I shall remember to enjoy myself when I am taken out once more!"

But when did this happen? It was one morning when people came to set things to rights in the garret. The boxes were moved; the tree was pulled out. They threw it rather roughly against the floor; but one of the servants dragged it towards the stairs, where it was daylight.

"Now life begins again," thought the tree, for it felt the fresh air and the first beams of the sun. Presently it was in the yard again. All was done so quickly that the tree quite forgot to look at itself, there was so much to be seen around it. The yard was close to a garden, where every thing was in bloom. The roses hung over the light trellis-work, full of freshness and perfume; the linden-trees were in blossom; and the swallows flew about, and said, "Quirre-virre-vit, my true-love is come!" But it was not the fir-tree they meant.

"Now I shall begin life again," cried the fir-tree; and it stretched out its branches. But, alas! they were all dry and yellow, and it was thrown into a corner among weeds and nettles. The gold-paper star still dangled at its top, and glittered in the sunshine.

Some of the merry-hearted children who had danced round the tree at Christmas, and had had such a joyous evening, were playing in the yard.

One of the youngest of them ran and tore off the gold star.

"Just look what there was hanging on the ugly old fir-tree," said he; and he trampled on the branches till they crackled again.

Then the tree saw the flowers in the garden in all the freshness of their beauty; and then it looked at itself, and wished that it had remained in its dark corner in the garret. It thought of its blithesome youth in the wood, of the merry Christmas Eve, and of the little mice that had listened so eagerly to the story of Clumpy Dumpy.

"It is past! it is past!" said the poor fir-tree. "Had I but enjoyed myself while I could! It is past! it is past!"

Then the man-servant came and cut up the tree into little pieces, till he got a whole bundle of it together. It blazed up brightly under the large brewing-copper, heaving many a deep sigh, and every sigh was like a little cracker. So the children that were playing in the yard ran in and looked into the fire, crying, "Pop! bang!" while, at every crack he gave, the fir-tree thought of the summer-days in the wood, and of the winter nights when the stars were twinkling: it thought of Christmas Eve, and Clumpy Dumpy,—the only story it knew, and therefore the only one it could tell. And then it was all burnt to ashes.

Still the boys were playing in the garden; and the youngest of them had the gold star on his breast, which the tree had worn on the happiest evening of its life. This was over now, and now it was all over with the tree, and with my story too. Over, over! and so it is with every thing at last!

THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE CHIMNEY-SWEEP.

DID you ever see a very old cupboard that age had made quite black and dingy, with leafy work and curious figures carved upon it? Just such a one as this once stood in the parlour of a house. It had been handed down to the owner by his greatgreatgrandmother, and it was carved all over from top to bottom with roses and tulips. The lines had been strangely turned and twisted beneath the workman's chisel; and some of them ended in little stag's-heads with beautiful antlers. But on the middle of the cupboard a man in full length was carved out: it made you laugh to look at him; and he grinned, himself, for you could not say he laughed; he had the legs of a goat, little horns on his head, and a long beard. The children

in the room always called him Lieutenant-Colonel-General-Commandant-Goat-Legs, for that was a hard word to pronounce, and there are not many who obtain the title. Well, there he kept standing with his eye upon the table under the looking-glass, for a lively little shepherdess made of porcelain was there. Her shoes were gilt, her frock was prettily looped up with a red rose, and, besides this, she had a gold bonnet, and a shepherd's crook; she was a beautiful creature. Close by her stood a little chimney-sweeper, as black as a coal, although he was made of porcelain too. He was really as neat and clean as the best of them. His being a chimney-sweep was only a pretence; the porcelain-manufacturer could just as well have made a prince of him: it was all one to a clever workman.

There he stood so prettily with his bag and his brush, and with a face too as fair as that of a little girl: now this was rather a fault, for it might have been blackened a little. His place was quite close to the shepherdess: they had both been stationed where they were; and as there they were, side by side, they had agreed to be married, they suited each other so well; they were both young people, made of the very same sort of porcelain, and one as brittle as the other.

Now there was another figure standing close

beside them; it was an old bowing Chinese, three times as large as they were. He was made of porcelain too; and he said he was the little shepherdess's grandfather; and although he had no good proof of this, he persisted in claiming authority over her, and for this reason he had given a favourable nod to Lieutenant-Colonel-General-Commandant-Goat-Legs, who was a suitor for the little shepherdess's hand.

"There is a husband for you," said the old Chinese; "a husband who, I almost think, is all of mahogany, and who can make a Mrs. Lieutenant-Colonel-General-Commandant-Goat-Legs of you. He has a whole cupboard full of plate, setting aside what is in the secret drawers."

"I will not go into the dark cupboard," said the little shepherdess; "I have heard say he has eleven porcelain wives inside."

"Well, then, you can be the twelfth," said the Chinese. "This very night, as soon as we hear the old cupboard give a 'crack,' you shall hold your wedding, as true as I am a Chinese!" And so saying, he nodded his head and fell asleep.

But the little shepherdess began to cry, and looked tenderly at her beloved porcelain chimney-sweeper.

"I must ask you," said she, "to go forth with me into the wide world; for we cannot stay here."

"I will do any thing you like," said the little chimney-sweep. "Let us be off at once; I dare say I shall be able to support you by my profession."

"If we were but safely off the table!" said she; "for I shall never be happy till we are in the wide world together."

Then he tried to cheer her, and shewed her how to plant her little foot on the raised edges and leafy goldwork of the leg of the table; and now there they were, safe upon the floor. But when they looked up at the old cupboard, there was such a to-do there. All the carved stags were stretching their necks still farther out, tossing up their horns, and then standing at gaze; while Lieutenant-Colonel-General-Commandant-Goat-Legs leaped up into the air, and shouted across the room to the old Chinese, "They are running away! they are running away!"

This frightened them terribly, and they jumped as quickly as they could into a low drawer near the window.

In this lay three or four broken packs of cards, and a little puppet-show, which had been put together as well as they could manage it. A play was being acted at the time; and all the queens —heart and diamond, club and spade—sat in the front row, and fanned themselves with flowers.

we see them do on the cards; and behind them stood all the knaves, ready to wait upon them when they wanted any thing. The story of the play was about two persons who could not marry each other, as they wished to do: and the shepherdess began to cry at the sight of it; for this was just her own case.

"I cannot stand this," said she; "I must get out of the drawer." But when they reached the ground again and looked up at the table, the old Chinese was awake and trembling in his whole body, though, from his waist downwards, he was nothing but a lump of porcelain.

"Oh, the old Chinese is coming!" cried the little shepherdess; and then she fell down on her porcelain knees, she was so overcome with grief.

"A thought strikes me," said the chimney-sweep; "what if we creep into the large vase that stands in the corner? there we may lie on roses and lavender, and throw dust in his eyes when he comes."

"That will be of no use," said she. "Besides this, I know that the old Chinese and the flower-vase were once engaged to each other; and there is always a lurking fondness remaining, when people have once been on such a footing together. No, there is no help for us but to go out into the wide world."

"Have you really courage enough to go forth with me into the world?" said the chimney-sweep. "Have you considered what a large place it is, and that we shall never be able to come back again?"

"I have thought of all that," said she.

Then the chimney-sweep looked her full in the face. "My path is up the chimney," said he. "Will you really venture with me through the stove, and through the pipe, too, that leads into the chimney? When I am once there, I know how to manage. We shall climb up till we are quite out of their reach; and, at the top of all, there is a hole that leads out into the wide world."

So saying, he led her to the door of the stove.

"Oh, how black it looks!" cried she. But still she went on with him, through the body of the stove and all along the pipe, where it was as dark as pitch.

"Now we are in the chimney," said he; "and look, look, what a beautiful star is shining up there!"

It was a real star in the sky, and it shone down upon them, just as if it wished to shew them the way. And they crept and clambered on, so high, so high, up such a dismal dark place! And the little chimney-sweep held her up,

and shewed her the best places for her to plant her little porcelain feet. In this way they reached the top of the chimney; and then they seated themselves, for they were dreadfully tired, and so they well might be.

The sky, with all its stars, was above them, and the roofs of the houses far beneath them. They saw so far around them! they had such a splendid view of the world! The poor shepherdess had never thought it was like this; she leaned her head on her chimney-sweeper's breast, and wept and sobbed till the gold buckle of her sash gave way.

"This is too much for me," said she; "I cannot bear it. The world is too great. Oh, if I were but on the table under the looking-glass again! I shall never be happy till I am there again. I have followed you out into the wide world, and now you will gladly take me back again, if you have any love for me."

And the chimney-sweep tried to reason with her: he reminded her of the old Chinese and Lieutenant-Colonel-General-Commandant-Goat-Legs; but all she did was to sob and kiss her little chimney-sweep, so that he could not refuse her, although it was foolish not to do so.

So with great difficulty they groped their way down the chimney again, and crept through the

pipe into the stove: it was a most disagreeable task; and at last they stood once more behind the little iron door. There they stopped and listened, to find out how things were in the room. All was still. They peeped out; and, alas! there lay the old Chinese on the ground in the middle of the room: he had fallen from the table in trying to follow them, and had been broken in three. The whole of his back had been dashed off in one piece, and his head had rolled into a corner. Lieutenant-Colonel-General-Commandant-Goat-Legs stood where he always had stood, thinking about the disaster.

"Oh, what a frightful sight!" said the little shepherdess. "My poor old grandfather is broken in pieces, and it is all our fault. I shall never get over this!" And she wrung her little hands.

"He can be riveted," said the chimney-sweep; "he can be riveted very well. Do not be so violent. If they cement him well in the back, and drive a good rivet into his neck, he will be as good as new, and be able to say as unpleasant things to us as before."

"Do you think so?" said she.

And after this they crept up upon the table again, to the places where they had formerly stood.

"Think! what a way we have been!" said the

chimney-sweep; "we might have spared ourselves all this trouble."

"Would that we had my old grandfather riveted again!" said the shepherdess; "would it cost much, do you think?"

And riveted he was. The master of the house had him cemented in the back, and a strong rivet passed through his neck; and then he was as good as new, though he could not nod.

"I think you are grown mighty high since your accident," said Lieutenant-Colonel-General-Commandant-Goat-Legs. "I do not see that you have any reason to look so fierce. Shall I have her, or shall I not?"

Then the chimney-sweep and the little shepherdess gave the old Chinese such a touching look! they were so afraid he might nod! But this he could not do, and it was not at all to his liking to have to tell a stranger that he constantly carried a rivet in his neck. And so the little porcelain pair remained together, blessing their grandfather's rivet over and over again, and loving each other till they both fell to pieces.

THE

ELDER-FAIRY.

THERE was once a little boy who had been out and got his feet wet; but nobody could make out how this had happened, for the weather was very dry. So now his mother undressed him and put him to bed, and then had the tea-kettle brought in, that she might make him a good warm cup of elder-flower tea. At this moment, too, the kind old man came in at the door. He lived at the top of the house all alone, for he had neither wife nor children; but then he was so fond of other people's children, and he could tell them so many fairy-tales and pretty stories, that it was quite a treat to listen to him.

"Now drink your tea!" said his mother, "and then perhaps some one will tell you a story."

"Yes; if I did but know a new one," said the old man with a pleasant nod of the head. "But where did the little fellow get his feet wet?" said he.

"Ah, where did he?" said his mother; "that is what nobody can make out."

"Shall I have a story?" said the little boy.

"Yes, if you can tell me pretty nearly, for this I must know first, how deep the gutter is in the little street where you go to school."

"Just half way up my boots," said the boy; "but then I am obliged to go into the deep hole at the end of it."

"Ha, ha! that is how the wet feet come," said the old man; "now I certainly ought to tell a story, but I do not know any more."

"You can make one in a minute," said the little boy; "mother says, you can make a story out of every thing you see, and find a tale in all you touch."

"Yes; but such stories as those are worth nothing; no, the proper sort come of themselves; they give a tap, tap, on my forehead, and say, 'here we are.'"

"Won't it give a tap, tap, very soon?" said the little boy.

His mother laughed, put elder-flowers into the teapot, and poured boiling water over them.

"Oh, a story, a story!" cried her child.

"Yes; if a pretty tale would please to come of itself; but such a one as we want is always very grand; it only comes when it feels inclined: wait, hark!" said he of a sudden, "there we have it; there is one in the teapot!"

And the little boy looked towards the teapot. The lid began rising and rising; and the elder-flowers came out all fresh and white, and shot forth long branches; they even issued from the spout, spreading themselves on all sides and growing larger and larger. What a beautiful elder-bush! Nay, it was quite a tree, as it made its way to the bed and pushed the curtains aside. What a bloom and sweet smell there was! And in the middle of the tree sat an old woman with a kind smiling face, and in a singular dress. It was all of green, like the leaves of the elder-tree, and was studded with large white elder-flowers; you could not see at once whether it was silken stuff, or real green leaves and flowers.

"What is the lady's name?" said the little boy.

"Why, the Greeks and Romans," said the old man, "called her Dryas; but this we cannot understand. Now the seafaring people in Copenhagen have a better name for her. They call her Elder-Fairy, and she it is whom you must mind. Listen now, and look at the beautiful elder-tree."

Just such a large blooming tree stands in Ny-

boder at Copenhagen. It first grew in the corner of a little humble yard. One beautiful sunny afternoon two old people were sitting beneath the shade of the tree. It was an old, very old seaman and his wife, who was nearly as old as he. They had grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and were about to keep the day when they would have been married fifty years. But they could not properly call to mind the date; and the Elder-Fairy sat in the tree, and looked as pleasant and smiling as she now does here. "I know very well when the day will be," said she; but they could not hear her; they were talking of olden times.

"Ay, do you remember," said the old seaman, "how we used to run about and play together when we were little? it was in this very yard where we are now sitting; and we planted little twigs in the ground and made a garden."

"Yes," said the old woman, "I remember that quite well. And we watered the little twigs, and one of them was an elder twig, which took root and put forth green branches, till it at last became the large tree under which we old people are sitting."

"Ha, to be sure! and in the corner there stood a water-tub, in which I swam my ship. I had cut it out myself: how beautifully it could

sail! But I soon had to sail away myself in quite another way."

"But first we went to school and learned something," said she, "and after that we were confirmed. How we both wept; and in the afternoon, do you remember, we went hand-in-hand to the round tower, and looked out upon Copenhagen and the sea; and then we went to Friedrichsberg, where the king and queen were rowing about on the canals in their splendid boat."

"True, but I had to go about in a very different way; for many years too, and on very long voyages."

"Ah, yes; I often cried about you," said she. "I thought you were dead and gone, and were lying and being washed about by the waters. Many a night I rose from my bed and looked to see if the vane were turning. Yes, it turned indeed; but you did not come. Oh! I remember one particular day; it rained in torrents; the watchman was just passing the door of the house where I was in service, and I had gone down stairs with the dust and sweepings. I stood at the door. Oh, what weather it was! And as I was standing there, who should come up but the postman? He gave me a letter: it was from you! What a roundabout way it had travelled! I tore it open and read it. I laughed and wept for joy.

It said that you were in the warm country where the coffee grows,—a beautiful land that must be. It told me so much; and I saw it all as I stood there with the pan full of dust, and the rain falling in torrents before me. Suddenly some one seized me round the waist—"

"Yes, but you gave him a famous box on the ear; it seemed to ring again."

"Why, because I did not know it was you. You had come just as quickly as your letter; and how handsome you looked! So you are now too. You had a long yellow silk handkerchief in your pocket, and a nice smooth hat on your head; you were so smart. Oh, what rough weather it was, and what a state the street was in!"

"Then we married, if you remember," said he; "and then, when we had our first little lad, and Mary, and Niels, and Peter, and Hans Christian—"

"Yes, and how they all grew up to be good and steady, so that every body liked them."

"And their children have had little ones in their turn," said the old sailor; "yes, so they are children's children's children;—that shews something, Granny; why, if I am not mistaken, it was at this time of the year that we were married."

"Yes, this very day is the fiftieth wedding-day," said the Elder-Fairy, who now popped down her head between the old couple. They thought

it was their neighbour nodding at them. They looked each other in the face, and clasped each other by the hand. Soon after this their children and children's children came. They knew very well that it was the fiftieth wedding-day. They had given them their good wishes that morning already; but the old people had forgotten it, whilst they remembered very well all that had taken place so many years before. And the elder-tree smelled so sweetly, and the sun, just then setting, threw his parting beam in the old people's faces. They both looked hale and ruddy; and the youngest of their grandchildren danced round them, crying out in the joy of his heart, that there was to be such a fine set-out that evening; they were to have nice baked potatoes: and the Elder-Fairy nodded in the tree, and shouted "Hurrah!" with the rest of them.

"But that was no fairy-tale," said the little boy, who had heard the old man's story.

"No, of course not," said the old man; "but let us ask the Elder-Fairy about it."

"That was no fairy-tale," said the Elder-Fairy; "but now there is one coming. The strangest tale of fancy often grows out of what is real; or else, for instance, my beautiful elder-bush could not have sprouted up out of the teapot."

And then she took the little boy out of bed,

laid him on her breast, and the elder-branches, full of flower, closed round them both. There they sat, in a beautiful bower, which flew away with them through the air: oh, it was delightful! The Elder-Fairy had all at once changed to a pretty little girl; but her frock was of the same green stuff, with the same white flowers upon it, that the old dame had worn. On her bosom she wore a real elder-flower, and a whole wreath of elder-blossom entwined her auburn locks. Her eyes were so large, so blue; they were beautiful indeed. She and the little boy kissed each other; and they were of the same age, and had the same sense of joy.

They went hand-in-hand from the bower, and stood in the beautiful flower-garden at home. On a peg near the fresh green lawn hung his father's stick. For the little children there was life in the stick. As soon as they straddled across it, the smooth and shining top changed to the head of a fine neighing horse: the long black mane began to flutter in the wind, and four strong spare legs shot forth. The horse was spirited: they went round the lawn at a gallop.

"Huzza! Now we will ride on for miles," said the boy; "we will ride to the great nobleman's house where we were last year!"

So they rode round and round the lawn, while

the little girl,—who, we know, was the Elder-Fairy all the time,—kept crying out, "Now we are in the country. Do you see the farmer's house with the huge oven, that stands out from the wall like some monstrous egg? The elder-tree spreads its branches over it; and the cock goes and scratches for the hens; look, how proud he is! Now we are near the church. It stands upon the hill near the two large oak-trees, one of which is half eaten away! Now we are at the forge, where the fire is burning, and men half-naked are plying the hammer, and sending out the sparks all round them. On, on to the nobleman's seat!"

And all that the little girl said, as she sat behind him on the stick, came flying past. The boy saw it all, and yet they never got more than round the lawn. Then they played in the side-walk, and raked a part of the bed to make a little flower-garden of; and the little girl took elder-flowers from her hair, and planted them; and they grew, just like those in Nyboder, which the old people had spoken of. They walked together hand-in-hand, as the old couple had done in their childhood; but not up to the round tower, nor to the garden at Friedrichsberg: no, the little girl clasped her playmate round the waist, and they flew about far and wide over the country. Spring

came, and summer came, then harvest-time, and then winter: the boy caught up a thousand images in eye and heart, while the little girl kept singing, "*This* you will never forget!" And the whole way they flew the elder-tree smelled so sweetly, so deliciously! Well could the boy catch the scent of the roses and the beech-trees; but the perfume of the elder-tree was stronger still, for its flowers bloomed upon his playmate's heart, where his head, too, often rested in his flight.

"How beautiful it is here in spring!" said the little girl; for they stood in the beech-wood, where the trees were just budding,—where the green clover lay full of fragrance at their feet, with the pale-red anemony smiling so sweetly through it. "Oh, would it were always spring in the fragrant Danish beech-grove!"

"How delightful it is here in summer!" said she; and they flew past old knightly castles, whose red walls and jagged gables were reflected in the moats; while the swans swam along, or peered up the cool shady avenues. The corn waved in the fields like a lake when ruffled by the wind; in the ditches grew red and yellow flowers; and on the hedges wild hops and blooming convolvuli. In the evening the moon rose, large and round; while the hay smelled so sweetly in the meadows. "Oh, this will never be forgotten!"

"How beautiful it is here in autumn!" said the little girl. The air was twice as high and twice as blue as before; and the wood was tinged with the most enchanting hues of red, green, and yellow. The hounds went fast away; whole bevies of feathered game flew screaming over the woods and bramble-covered rocks. The sea was of a dark blue, with white sails skimming over it; and in the barns sat old women and children picking hops. The young among them sang songs, but the elder ones told stories of goblins and wizards. What could be a happier scene than this?

"How beautiful it is here in winter!" said the little girl. All the trees were covered with hoar-frost, so that they looked like white streaks of coral. The snow crackled under foot, just like new boots do; and one little falling star dropped after another from the sky. In the houses the Christmas-tree was lit up; and then was the time for presents and happy faces. The fiddle sounded in the peasant's house, and there was snap-dragon and bob-apple: even the poorest little child said, "It *is* beautiful in winter, though!"

Yes, beautiful it was; and the little girl shewed the boy every thing; and still the elder-tree shed its perfume, and the red flag with the white cross upon it—the flag under which the old seaman in

Nyboder had sailed—still waved in the breeze. The boy now grew to be a young man. He had to go abroad into the world, far away to the warm country where the coffee grows: but on leaving, the little girl took a sprig of the elder-flowers from her bosom, and gave it to him to keep for her sake. He laid it in his prayer-book; and in foreign lands when he opened the book, it always happened to be at the place where the flower of remembrance lay, and the more he looked at it, the fresher it became; so that he breathed, as it were, the fragrance of the Danish woods: and quite plainly could he see the little girl peeping through the leaves of the flower with her bright blue eyes, and could hear her whisper, "How beautiful it is here in spring and summer, autumn and winter!" while hundreds of well-remembered images came flitting before him.

Thus many years passed away; and he was now an old man sitting with his aged wife beneath a blooming elder-tree. They held each other's hand, as their old grandfather and grandmother had done in Nyboder; and talked, as they had talked, of olden times, and of that golden day—their fiftieth wedding-day; while the little girl with the blue eyes and the elder-flowers in her hair, sat in the tree over their heads. She nodded to them, and said, "This is your fiftieth wed-

ding-day;" and then she took two flowers from her wreath and kissed them: at first they shone like silver, and afterwards like gold; and when she laid them upon the old people's heads, each flower became a golden crown. There they both sat, like king and queen beneath the sweet-smelling tree, that looked for all the world like an elder-tree; and he told his aged wife the story of the Elder-Fairy, as it had been told to him when he was a little boy: and they both thought there was so much in it like what had happened to them; and that which was most like pleased them best.

"Yes, so it is!" said the little girl on the tree. "Some call me Elder-Fairy, others call me Dryas; but my proper name is Memory. I am she who sits in the tree, that keeps growing and growing. Oh, I can look back on the past, and tell stories! Let me see if you still have your flower."

Then the old man opened his prayer-book. There lay the elder-flower, as fresh as if it had but just been put in; and Memory smiled, and the old pair with the gold crowns on their heads sat in the crimson glow of evening. They closed their eyes, and—and—ah! then the story was all over.

The little boy lay in bed. He did not know whether he had been dreaming, or whether some one had really told him the tale. The teapot was

standing upon the table, but no elder-tree grew out of it; and the old man, who had been speaking, was just going out at the door. And this he did.

"How beautiful that was!" said the little boy. "Mother, I have been in the warm countries."

"Yes, no doubt of that," said his mother. "When we drink two cupfuls of elder-tea, we soon begin to feel ourselves in the warm countries;" and so saying she covered him up closely that he might not take cold. "You must have been sleeping, I think, whilst I disputed with him, as to whether it was a true story or a fanciful one."

"And where is the Elder-Fairy?" said the boy.

"She is in the teapot," said his mother; "and there let her stay a while."

THE

LITTLE GREEN DUCK.

IT was a delightful day in the country, for summer shone in all its beauty. The wheat was ripe, the oats were green, the hay in the meadows was put up into cocks that looked like little hillocks of grass, and the stork walked about on his long red legs and talked Egyptian—for this was the language he had learned of his mother.

Round the fields and meadows were copses of various thickness, which here and there wound their green circlet round smooth deep lakes, whose waters curled at moments beneath the gentle breeze. Yes, it must have been beautiful in the country then. Basking in the sunshine lay an old mansion with its walls and its moat, proud

and knightly as in the olden time. From the walls down to the very edge of the water grew a whole forest of colt's-foot. So high and tall were the shrubs, that little children could easily stand upright in the shade of the largest of them. It seemed to be a sort of little wilderness, the herbs grew so wildly and all was so still.

In this place a duck sat upon her nest, intent on hatching a little brood. But she was almost tired of this wearisome task, important as it was; because it took so long, and they so seldom came to see her. The other ducks were fonder of swimming about in the moat and the ponds in the garden, than of pushing their narrow breasts up the green bank, for the sake of sitting and chattering with the anxious mother.

At length "crack!" went one egg; "crack!" went another, and then a third, fourth, fifth, and sixth. "Piep, piep," cried something; "piep, piep, piep," on all sides, more than a dozen times. The yolks of all the eggs had suddenly sprung to life; and the little half-naked creatures thrust their heads in amazement from a habitation that had become uncomfortable and unsafe for them.

"Quick, quick!" said mamma: and so the little things made all the haste they could. They looked about them on all sides, as if they were taking a view of the green leaves; and their

mother let them look as long as they pleased; for green, she knew, was good for the eyes.

"What a great place the world is!" said the little ones; and of a truth a very different sort of playground lay before them to what they had had in the egg.

"Do you think this the whole world?" replied their mother. "Oh, no; it stretches itself out a long way beyond the garden and the little glebe where the vicar's cows are grazing; but I was never so far as that. I hope I have you all together," said she, in the anxious tender tone of a mother. And then she got up upon her legs; though by so doing, in spite of all her care, her little scrambling chirping progeny were regularly upset. "No, I have not got them all yet!" said the weary watcher with a deep deep sigh. "The largest egg is still where it was. How long is this to last? I am really growing quite sick of it."

"Well, how do you do now?" inquired an old duck, who came to pay a formal visit to her friend.

"There is no getting done with one egg," said the other duck in a plaintive tone. "The shell must be too hard for the poor little thing to make a hole through it. But now you shall see the others; they are the prettiest little bantlings that ever gladdened a mother's heart."

"Just shew me the egg that will not break," said the old duck consequentially; "trust me, it is a turkey-egg. I was taken in myself in the same way once, and a pretty piece of work I had with the little things. For they were afraid of the water, I must tell you. How I tried to entice them! how I scolded and buffeted them! It was all of no use; they were determined not to go in. Now, let me look at this stubborn egg. Yes, to be sure, quite right; it *is* a turkey-egg. What have you to do with such a sorry changeling as this? Why do not you leave the nest at once, and give the others a good lesson in swimming?"

"No, I would rather sit a little longer," returned the old duck, with a shake of the head. "As I have sat so long, a few days will make but little difference; no, stay I *will*, even though all our pleasure-time should be spent over it."

"Well, pray do, if it suits you so well," said the old duck, jeeringly; and with a sort of half curtsey she took her leave. "The changeling will give her enough to do," sagely thought she, as she went.

At length the large egg burst: "Piep, piep," cried the little terrified new comer, or rather loiterer, as he turned over head and heels out of the shell. He was such a great ugly thing. Mamma scarcely ventured to look at him; for the oftener

she did so, the less she knew what to say. At last she cried out, all at once, "Well, that is a frightful little creature, to be sure. Can it be a turkey-changeling, though, after all? Wait, I will soon see that. Into the water he shall go; for without wasting any words about it, I will push him plump in myself; and, if he cannot swim and dive properly, he must be drowned,—and serve him right."

It was delightful weather next day. The sun shone so fairly on the rustling leaves of the colt's-foot. The mamma came waddling on with her whole family at her heels. Platsch! and *in* she went into the water. "Quick, quick," she cried, and the little ducks followed her example, one after the other. Not one wanted to stay behind. The water closed over their heads, but they soon came up again, and swam about beautifully. Their legs went of themselves; and they were all there, even the ugly little grey loiterer swam cheerily about with them.

"No, it is not a turkey," said the old duck. "Just look, now, how nimbly the little fellow uses his legs; how straight he carries himself. And in real fact he is a very pretty little fellow, to look closely at him. Quick, quick now, come along with me," cried she, "and I will introduce you into the great world, and present you in the

poultry-yard. But mind and keep close to me, or you will be trodden upon; and, above all, beware of the cat."

And so saying, she led them into the poultry-yard. There was a terrible hurly-burly going on there just then; for two respectable families were quarrelling for the head of an eel, and in the mean time the cat sneaked off with it.

"Such is the way of the world," said the old duck, licking her bill; for she would very much have liked to have a bit of the eel's head herself. "Now, bend your legs," said she aside to them, "and curtsey prettily, with a graceful bend of the neck, to that old duck yonder, who ranks as the grandest of all of them here. She is of true Spanish blood, and that makes her puff herself out so solemnly. Do you see? she has a red piece of rag round her left leg; this is the most glorious distinction that can ever fall to the lot of a duck. It means, in fact, that she shall be known and honoured by beasts and men, and that the rare blessing is awarded her of spending her life in peace. Make haste, children; but for goodness-sake do not turn your legs in so. A well-bred child keeps his legs far apart, like papa and mamma do. Now just do as I do, and attend to the word of command. Besides, when you curtsey or bow, do not forget to give your necks a grace-

ful curve, and then boldly say, 'Quack, quack,' and not a syllable more."

This they all did. But the other ducks all around looked at them scornfully, and said, loud enough to be heard, "Yes, yes; they want to palm this stupid brood upon us, as if there were not enough of us without them; we really could do very well without such a set as this; and, pish! what a fright that fat ugly thing is. We will not have the little oddity with us." And in a moment a saucy drake flew at the little grey-green intruder, and bit him again and again in the neck.

"Let him alone," cried the indignant mother. "He does no one any harm, and I will not have him ill-treated."

"That may be," replied the pettish drake; "but he is too large for his age, and besides he is such an oddity. So he must be put to rights."

"Those are really pretty children of mamma's," said the old duck with the red rag on her leg; "all very pretty, excepting that one specimen there, which is any thing but perfect."

"I am very sorry, my lady," replied the mother of the brood, making a violent effort to conceal her mortification. "He is certainly no beauty; but he has a good disposition, and he swims as well as any of the rest; nay, I may say a

little better. I think he will grow up to be pretty, if instead of becoming taller, he rounds off and fills up in softer proportions. He has lain too long in the egg, and for this reason his figure has suffered."

As she thus spoke in favour of her ill-favoured little son, she sought to brighten up his thin green uniform where it was ruffled, smoothing the chafed feathers of his neck with her bill, and putting all in order wherever she could. "And, after all," continued the fond and zealous mother, "we do not look for that elegance of form, that delicacy and roundness of frame, in a drake, which are the chief charm in the duck. I am of opinion my little lad will one day be a very fine fellow; I will be bound he will make his way."

"The other little ones are sweet creatures," said the old Spanish lady-duck once more. "Make yourselves quite at home," continued she, "and when you find the head of an eel or any thing of that sort, you may bring it to me, mind."

In this way the new brood soon became quite at home. The poor ugly-looking dirty-green bird, which had come latest from the egg, was bitten, buffeted, bantered, and laughed at both by the ducks and the fowls. "He is much too large," said they one and all. And the braggadocio turkey-cock, who, because he wore spurs, thought himself almost equal to an emperor, puffed him-

self out in grand style like a ship in full sail; and the more he swaggered in his folly, the redder grew his fiery head. The poor persecuted duckling knew not what to be at. Sorrow for the ill-treatment he had received in the poultry-yard on account of his reputed ugliness weighed heavy at his innocent heart.

Thus things went the first day; and afterwards they grew worse and worse. The dirty-green duckling that was frightfully ugly was set upon by all of them, old and young. His brothers and sisters even were quite angry with him, and kept saying, "If the cat would but lay hold of you, you nasty thing!" But his mother, borne down by this weight of disappointment, would often say with a sigh, "Oh, would that I had never brooded over you; or would that you were far away from here!"

And the ducks bit him, the hens pecked at him unmercifully, and the peasant-girl who gave them their food would often push him away with her foot.

So at last he made a desperate effort, and hurried away as fast as his weary legs and weak wings could carry him: and though the muddy earth which he had to hasten over was not his element, he, at last, as if aided by some strange power, overtopped the fence of the poultry-yard.

The little singing-birds started up in dismay from the bushes. "It is because I am so ugly," thought the little fugitive as he closed his eyes; however, he did not cease to push forward, under the guidance of instinct, to some vague and unknown mark. This mark was in real fact a large marsh encircled with a wood, where the wild ducks lived in numbers. There he remained the whole night, sad and fagged to death, and scarcely conscious where he was. In the mean while the full moon shone forth with such a smiling face, that one might have thought she was laughing at the merry-hearted frogs as they leaped from the turf into the water and from the water on to the turf again, dancing about like so many odd little elves.

With break of day the wild ducks rose from their soft wet bed, to soar on their whirring wings through the blue summer air. They gazed with astonishment on their new comrade. "What a comical little fellow!" cried they; "where can he come from?" And all this time the dirty-green stranger was turning himself politely to this side and that, bowing first right and then left, with more grace than a dancing-mistress, much less a dancing-master, ever could shew.

"You are desperately ugly," said the wild ducks; "but, however, that is nearly all one to us, so long as you do not marry among us."

Poor flouted thing! it certainly never thought of marrying; if it might but lie quietly in the sedge, and drink a little of the marshy water.

And there it remained for two whole days, till at last two wild ganders came; they were in high glee, for they had just broken from the egg themselves.

"Hark ye, master green-coat," said they; "you are so ugly, that we have taken quite a liking to you. Take your passage with us, and let us be off at once; hard by, there is another marsh, where some beautiful wild geese are living,—delicious little damsels that were left unsuited last autumn. You may very likely do great things among them, for you are such a prime piece of ugliness!"

Pop! bang! went something at that moment over their heads, and the two wild ganders fell down dead, while the water was reddened with their blood. Pop! bang! again; and whole flights of wild geese rose from the sedge and rushes. There was report after report. It was a grand shooting-day on the estate. The sportsmen surrounded the marsh, some of them even sat in the trees that stretched themselves out over the reeds. The blue smoke drifted in clouds through the dark green foliage, and shrouded the horizon with spectral forms. The dog went splash, splash, in the

thick morass, without caring a fig for the breeze that piped so tunefully on the wavy reeds. A terrible fright was this for the poor little drake. He tried to put his head under his wing, that he might see no more of these horrible sights; when suddenly a frightful great dog appeared, with his greedy tongue hanging out of his mouth, and blood-thirsty fury flashing in his eyes. The monster came on snuffing and smelling, and opening his jaws just close to the poor bird, which now gave itself up for lost. His mouth seemed like a yawning fiery gulf, and a fearful row of teeth came to view, shewing the weapons of attack employed by this devouring fiend. Splash, splash, he came, but generously went his way without capturing his easy prey.

"Oh, I am thankful indeed!" said the dirty-green bird, with a sigh; "I am so ugly, that even the greedy dog is too clever to snap at me!" So it remained quite still in its place, without stirring at all; whilst the shot whistled in the reeds over its head, and bang followed bang, as though a fortress were being bombarded.

It was late in the afternoon when the thundering noise gradually ceased. The poor young drake, that had been so wonderfully saved, did not yet, however, venture from his hiding-place.

He waited several hours before he drew his head cautiously from under his wing, and looked timidly around him; but soon after this he made all the haste he could from that scene of horror. If he formerly left the poultry-yard in dismay, he now fled in double terror abroad. He ran as well as he could over field and meadow, striving to leave the hateful marsh as far behind as possible, although he had once thought to find so peaceful a refuge there. A violent storm of wind, which rose at sunset, was not kind enough to shew any regard for the little half-fledged runaway, so that he found it very difficult to get on, and began to lose his strength.

That evening, however, he reached a sorry hovel, which was in such a miserable state, that it did not itself know which way to fall; so, for the present, it remained standing as it was. The poor bird crept as well as it could into the straw that covered the sides of the hovel; but still the wind whistled so, and shook it so roughly, that it had to crouch down on its tail to prevent itself being blown over and over. At last the storm grew louder and louder; when the little drake, to his great joy, perceived that the worm-eaten door of the hut was only ajar, so that there was just a little chink through which he could slip into the room. To be sure the hovel seemed to promise small

store of comfort, but still it would be a good shelter after all; and so in the little stranger went.

An old woman lived there with her tom-cat and a hen.

The cat purred so nicely, that they called him quite a master in spinning; besides he was an excellent washer, and could 'round a back' with any one in the neighbourhood; and you had only to stroke his coat a few times the wrong way, and fiery sparks would fly from it. The woman coaxingly called him her little son. The hen, on her part, had little short legs, and so she was called Leggy-littly. She regularly laid the nicest eggs; and her mistress loved her as if she were her own child. Peace and happiness were quite at home beneath this little tottering roof of straw, as they so often are beneath others of the kind.

In the morning the strange unbidden guest was soon discovered; and the cat began to spin, and the hen to cluck.

"What is all this about?" said the old woman, who immediately began to look about the house; and on seeing the spare young bird, took it for a fat duck, which had strayed that way in the dark.

"This is a fine piece of luck!" cried she, in joyful surprise. "Now I may perhaps have duck's eggs. We must give it a trial."

Now the tom-cat was 'Sir' in the house, and the hen 'Madam;' and they always said, "We and the world," when they spoke of themselves. The little drake, indeed, could not help thinking that there might be two opinions on that matter, but the hen would not hear of this.

"Can you lay eggs?" said she.

"No!"

"Then, you will be pleased to hold your bill!"

And the tom-cat said, "Can you spin? can you 'round a back?'"

"No!"

"Then, you are not to put a word in when rational people are talking."

And the poor little green bird sat sorrowfully in a corner, vainly struggling against the ill-humour which his two conceited companions were the cause of, but which they certainly did not share. He often thought of the nice fresh air and the cheerful sunshine in the fields. He felt so strong a desire—so keen a longing to swim once more on the clear blue water, and to splash about in the yielding element to his heart's content, that he could not help at last, after a sleepless night, telling the hen his thoughts.

"What mad fancies are these that have turned that foolish head of yours?" replied the hen, in an angrier tone than her quiet spirit had ever em-

ployed before. "You have nothing to do, and so you are fairly tormented with your idleness; that is the cause of all your stupid spleen and silly fancies. Be good and lay eggs, or spin a little; and then it will all pass off."

"But it is so delightful to swim on the water," rejoined he, with a sigh. "It is so delicious to dive down to the bottom, and see the moon through the bright liquid glass."

"Yes; a great pleasure, truly," cried the hen, getting cross. "You are mad, I think. Ask Tom, now; he is the cleverest fellow I know; ask him if he is fond of swimming in the water, and diving to the bottom. To say nothing of myself. Ay, ask our good mistress, the old lady; for there is not a cleverer lady than she in the whole world. Do you think she would feel very much inclined to go for a swim?"

"You don't understand me," said the sorrowful drake.

"Well, if *we* do not understand you, who does, you yellow-bill?" said Madam Hen, in her rudest manner. "You will surely not pretend to be cleverer than the cat and our mistress, to say nothing of my own proper person. Do not put on such a fierce look, now, but be thankful for all the kindness that has been shewn you. Have you not a nice warm room here, and companions too, of

whom you may learn something? But you have a great deal too much of the tedious chatterer and long-necked dreamer about you to be any pleasure to us. You may safely believe me. I really mean well by you; for I only say such things to you as you do not like to hear; and we may always know our true friends by this. But now, above all, see that you lay eggs, and learn to spin."

"I think I shall wander forth into the world," said the young drake, mustering up its courage.

"Ay, so do," answered the hen, in any thing but a civil tone. "*We*, at least, shall lose nothing by your absence."

And now the poor green little thing, without wasting many words at parting, began its wanderings anew. He left the unfriendly hovel without any reluctance, and hastened to the waters that he had been pining for so long. Merrily he swam about the shining floods in the form that seemed so uncouth for a duck, diving boldly down to the bottom, and looking up at the moon, whose pale disk, as seen through the flood, looked like a rolling ball with a bright light inside it. But presently the stillness of the scene would become too much for him; and then if this or that animal appeared, all the greeting he got would be sure to be, "Ah, what an ugly creature! keep out of our way, you little monster!"

Now autumn drew to a close, and the snow-clouds filled the air. The leaves on the trees turned sere and yellow, or danced sorrowfully about beneath the lash of the wind. High up in the sky it looked icy cold, and the heavy clouds would burst every now and then, and shower down the rattling hail. The raven sat by the way-side, croaking its "aw, aw," for very chilliness: it makes one's fingers freeze to think of it. The poor little flouted drake was indeed badly off.

One bleak frosty evening, just as the sun was sinking, with his broad bronzed face like a wheel of fire on the triumphal car of creation, a flight of beautiful large birds came whirring, all at once, out of the bushes which were washed by the spray of the waters. The little ugly green bird thought he had never seen any thing more grand or more beautiful. Their spotless plumage sparkled like drifted snow, and their long necks, so gracefully rounded, seemed like a wavy bridge of down, swelling and heaving between the sky and the waters. They were swans. Onward they flew towards warmer countries and unfrozen lakes, making a sweet sound between singing and whistling, and giving stroke after stroke with their magnificent wings. They flew so high, so very high; and the little bird below began to feel so very

strangely: he turned round and round in the water, stretched his neck out after them, high up in the air, and for the first time in his life uttered such a strange shrill cry, that he was startled at it himself. Oh, from that moment he could never forget the happy, beautiful birds; and when they faded away on the grey horizon, like a little wavy flash or twinkling star, he plunged down to the very bottom of the water, and when he came up again, he was quite beyond himself for joy. He did not know the name of the birds, nor where they were flying to; but still he loved them, as he had never loved any thing before. He did not envy them in the least. How could he ever for a moment have thought of wishing to be so grand and so beautiful! He would have been glad enough if the stupid ducks only would have borne with him, — poor ugly little creature!

And it was such a cold winter, so dreadfully cold. The poor green bird had to swim about on his warm feathers as fast as he could, to keep from being quite frozen to death. But every night the space he had to swim in grew narrower and narrower. There was an ominous cracking in the ice as it grew thicker and thicker. At last he was so faint and weary, that he remained quite still, and was frozen up fast in it.

Early in the morning a peasant happened to come past. He saw the helpless plight of the unfortunate bird, and took pity on it; for a peasant has a heart as well as the bird that sings so sweetly in its cage, or dashes its head against the wires.

The kind-hearted countryman ventured boldly on the ice; he broke it with his wooden shoe, succeeded in saving the poor benumbed bird, and carried him home to his wife, where in the nice warm room he soon recovered, and became strong enough to enjoy the few pleasures that were so sparingly allotted to him.

The children of the house wanted to play with him; but the little drake thought they were going to hurt him, and so he flew frightened away into an earthen milk-pot, which was immediately broken in pieces, and the milk spilt upon the floor. The woman screamed and raised her hands; and this so terrified the poor bird, that it flew into the cream-pan, and then into the meal-tub, and out again. Oh, what a fright he looked now! The woman ran shrieking after him with the tongs; and the children fell over each other in their eagerness to catch him, and laughed and shouted for joy.

It was fine fun to them; but not so to the poor little bird, who now, so far from being green, was white as flour could make him. Fortunately,

however, the door was open, and he hastily seized the favourable opportunity, in the confusion of the moment, of gaining the open air. He then fluttered with difficulty to the neighbouring bushes, and soon fell down exhausted in the snow. There he lay without sense or feeling, as still as a dormouse in its wintry sleep.

But it would be too sad a task to tell of all the distress and trouble that the poor bird had to go through that hard winter. We need only say that he was lying as it were in a dream, under the sedge of the marsh, when the sun came out warmly again upon the earth. Then, when he felt the soft touch of spring, and heard the song of the larks, the young drake flapped his wings. They rustled much louder than before, and bore him bravely away. Almost before he knew where he was, he found himself in a large garden, where the fruit-trees were laden with bloom; where the elder-tree shed its sweetness on the air, while its long green branches drooped to the edge of the water, that wound its liquid way through the lawns. Oh, how delicious, how fresh was the spring! And now from the thicket three beautiful white swans came forth, swimming gently over the water. The poor drake knew the stately birds, with their soft swelling plumage, and a melancholy sadness came over him at the sight.

"I will go to them, the kingly birds," said he; "they will kill me, I know, for daring to come near them in my ugliness. But it matters not: it is better, at all events, to be killed by them than to be bit by the ducks, pecked by the hens, and kicked by the maid in the poultry-yard, to say nothing of the misery I must endure in the winter." Impelled by such thoughts as these, he plunged without scruple into the water, and composedly swam towards the three stately swans; which, as soon as they saw the stranger, darted forward with their feathers in full swell.

"Kill me," cried the poor creature, meekly bending his head to the water, and calmly awaiting the stroke of death. But why did he start so when his eyes met the flood? He beheld beneath him his own image: he was no longer a fat, ugly, dirty-green drake; no, he was himself a proud kingly swan!

To be sure, he had been born in the poultry-yard, but there even a swan's egg may sometimes be found.

And now who shall say how delighted the snow-white, the beautiful young swan was, to look back upon all the crosses and miseries which had been allotted to him in his childhood? Now he knew how to set a proper value on happiness, and on all the beauty that clothed him and sur-

rounded him. The large swans, too, gathered about him with many a winning gesture; and fondly smoothed his feathers with their bills.

At this moment some little children appeared in the garden, and came merrily running to the water. They threw bread and corn to the swans.

"Ha, look! there is a new one!" cried the youngest; and the rest of the children shouted for joy. "Yes, there is a new one come!" they cried. And they clapped their hands, and danced and jumped about; and then they ran to call papa and mamma. Cakes and bread were thrown into the water; and they all said, "Yes, the new one is the prettiest; he is such a darling young creature!" And the old swans were too good to be envious; they only bowed with the greatest politeness to their dear new companion.

When he saw and heard all this, the once dirty-green little bird felt quite ashamed. He put his head under his wing, and scarcely knew what to think of it. He was over-happy, and yet he was not at all proud; for a good heart is never proud. He only thought, though without any bitter feeling, on the time when he had been tormented and jeered at by every one; and now what a change! He heard them all say that he was the sweetest among the sweet.

And the elder-tree, with its long green branches

and fragrant bloom, drooped down to him on the water, while the golden sun shone so kindly and so warm. Then the plumage of the once-slighted bird rustled as he went: his slender neck rose to its full length, as conscious of its kingly form; while he cried aloud, in the joy of his heart, "Ah, never did I dream of such happiness as this in the days when I was the LITTLE GREEN DUCK!"

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